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The poems by Reed Whittemore appearing here, with the exception of "To My Desert," were selected from his latest book, *The Feel of Rock: Poems of Three Decades* (Dryad Press, Takoma Park: 1982), and are reprinted with permission of the publisher. "To My Desert" appears here for the first time.

Angel

C. J. Casner

Pigs and Skyscrapers

David Petersen

There are always two. A separate place for each.
The pigs usually remain in a pen populated
with several other pigs. If they are washed down
often, their bodies glow with a faint pink
hue—as though you can see
a sheet of blood move quietly beneath
their skin.

Skyscrapers are almost never found on farmland.
They are located in the city; they are washed
by either a March rainfall or a man
with red ears and a squeegee.

sky pigs and scrapers
pigs scraps an kyders

I think that a pig represents more than a ham
with a marmelade glaze. They are mammals;
they bear live young and have warm blood.
A pig thinks simple thoughts.

A skyscraper looks nothing like a pig.
They stand upright and accommodate many people
without using much land. They look
like the huge stone buddahs found in the Chin
Hills of Burma.

cigs rappers an skyds
prigs spyd care snaks

I feel close to both things. Pig and Skyscraper.
I think they are not separate;
a skyscraper does not have to remain in the city
and a pig does not have to stay in a wet stall
on a farm. Their worlds associate
with each other. I believe their resemblance
to me is not accidental.

sreparc syksd nas gip
sgipd nas reparc syks

Oxford Cottage *Stacey Boehm*

Life Deco

Jennifer La Rue

A hard pink edge of curtain is slicing at our collection of Fiestaware plates and shakers, at two coffee mugs and a napkin holder, and at the yellow middle bit of this morning's French toast; stabs, kicks up and down, making angles and arrows of the air and light. I am ignoring the mug of coffee in front of me, no longer steaming, but sullenly gathering its substance at its darkest depths, that part called the dregs.

I am having breakfast with Linda, who was my roommate, my best friend—the only person that I thought knew me well enough to really like me—for three of the four years we were both at Johns Hopkins, in Baltimore. We are talking about Barton again—for what? The hundredth time? Maybe more?

Linda is poking at her coffee with her middle finger; there are bits of a doughnut floating in circles inside, and Linda's fingertip keeps them moving. I offer to warm her cup, but she doesn't answer, just keeps stirring as she asks, "Of course, you still love him, right? I mean, I know he loves you—you love him too, right?"

Lately I must offer food if I want Linda to visit. She likes to come over and protest, between large mouthfuls, that I have cooked far too much of too rich a dish, and how can I do this to her, knowing how sluggish her metabolism is? Today she is on a diet; a new one, I wonder, or the same one she started five years ago?

"I don't know, Linda.... God, of *course* we love each other, or we would have given up months ago. That's not the point. Talking about it, it doesn't make sense; it's like.... Like going to Oz expecting a real heart, and having to come back with a red plastic watch in your chest."

Linda shakes her head, disgusted, amused. "Christ, Timmy, no wonder you're a mess. Got any more doughnuts?"

"In the bread box. There should be one more. Linda, listen. You know how people tell you when you're a kid that there's one person in the world who's perfect for one other person, and even though one of them might live in China and the other one in Switzerland, somehow they meet on an Alp somewhere and everything turns out just right? Well, I don't think that's true any more. I think somebody made it up."

Linda stops and smiles, a sweet, condescending smile, confectioners sugar on her upper lip. "Aw, Tim, for God's sake. No wonder you're such a mess."

Linda and I are in the breakfast nook. I told Barton, my boyfriend, that this was the place for us as soon as the realtor said those words: "breakfast nook."

"That's pretty homey, isn't it, Bart? Let's take it."

Barton, teasing me, speaking in his excited, high-pitched voice, explained to the realtor: "Timmy and I have decided to settle down. We need something homey. Nooks are apparently homey enough—got any crannies?" And then he went off to investigate, guessing that the bathroom might be in a cranny.

I stayed back, standing in the pool of wood on the kitchen floor, up to my ankles in sunlight thick as beeswax, and I saw myself slicing zucchini and summer squash at a broad, light wood chopping block like the ones grandmothers have in their kitchens.

We do not have a chopping block. There is, though, by the window, a stainless steel and red Formica table recruited from a diner off Route 684 in Connecticut. Barton brought it home one afternoon, his upper lip quivering shyly as it does when he is terribly pleased, and he told me how the diner it came from had on its walls, centered over each booth, remote selector panels and button sets for the jukebox, so that people waiting for their homefries and cheeseburgers could flip through the displays of pink and green cards, and laugh at the names of the singers and songs, and dig in their linty pockets for a quarter to play some old hit-parade favorites, without ever having to leave their seats.

The table was huge, gawky, ugly, made for one brief season, after which nobody remembered to chuck it out. Cheap. It made me feel like sneering, so I did. "You never told me you liked cheeseburgers."

Barton looked confused. "What?"

"I mean, what made you stop in the first place? I thought you were a pickier eater than that."

"I am—I mean, Timmy, I was looking for this table! For us! Don't you love it? Look—look at this—" Barton's finger wavered along some scratches in the Formica. "Biff loves Kathy 4-ever & ever" and "Stan's mom gives good head." "Look, Tim, these kids did this with *forks*—tin forks that probably bent in the middle while they worked. They sat there in Katy's Diner and drank Black Cows and etched their lives on this table—and now it's ours!"

I had gone to the sink and was holding a dishcloth under the stream of cold water, turning it and squeezing it until it was wet through. Barton's voice switched gears, became still, even, controlled. "Listen, okay, I'll call Amvets, or, or Goodwill. Where's the Yellow Pages? I should have checked before I brought it here—do I look under 'charities' or what? 'Industries,' maybe—Goodwill Industries."

Bending over the table, I wiped my cloth over Biff and Kathy and Stan's mom and the "Class of '72 rules forever." "Try 'Thrift Stores.' "

Barton's chin twitched, nervous, as he glanced up at me from the book. "Seriously? 'Thrift Stores'?"

"Oh, come on, Barton, don't call Goodwill or Amvets or anybody. The table is fine; I think it should stay. Only—" I scrubbed harder at the Formica, rubbing in fierce circles as if to hurt Stan and Biff and Kathy and the whole damned class of '72. "Only I thought we had this compromise, you know? You had all those flamingoes and chrome coasters that didn't look right with my granny quilts and kitchen witches, remember?" Of course he remembered; I was losing my cool, turning red, sweating inside. "Remember, we agreed to work together to make this place look sort of Manhattanish? It was your idea; it was going to look artsy, like somebody with really good taste lived here. I mean, we *agreed*, didn't we? I just thought that, okay, since it's a *studio* apartment—"

Barton laughed, an abrupt little cough of a laugh. "Oh, Timothy, just because it's called a studio apartment doesn't mean it has to be like an *artist's* studio." He breathed behind me, rubbing the tight joint where my neck meets my shoulders, kneading with his knuckles. He knew that felt good, and he knew he had won. "But if that's what you want, then we'll fill the place with easels and chalkboards and paint sets from Kresge's, and canvas stretchers, and we can even become artists ourselves, if you want it to be authentic. And we'll cover this beautiful table of ours with big splotches of paint, and never wash it up, and there will be bloodstains at the spots where we cut off our ears. God save us, though, if we ever decide to move into an efficiency: we would have to store all our things in file cabinets, with the sweaters tucked away under 'S' and the asparagus in the top drawer, efficiently spoiling away under 'A'."

Then Barton grew quiet, slid his hands down my back, away from my shoulders, to my waist and hips, and stood and squeezed and rocked, his lips so close to my ear that his whisper was a shout, "Come on, babe. Come on, Timmy. Let's get along, okay? I'll do what you want...."

I drew my teeth together, convincing myself, smiling until I was sure, then twisted my neck and kissed him on the chin. "Okay, Barton. We'll be okay."

And as we stood, he began to tickle my ribs, tickled them until I could no longer stand up. We fell to the couch, laughing and kissing, giggling and blocking out the noise from the street.

"Anyway, his name is Barton—Barton Ramsey. He's great; you'll love him. He collects Art Deco stuff; he loves Baltimore 'cause he says it's the Art Deco capital of the world. He's got the coolest apartment—it's like a museum or something. I can't wait for you to meet him; if he weren't gay, I'd be in love with him myself."

Linda was sitting on the edge of her bed, pulling on her pantyhose. I was visiting her for the first time since she had moved to Boston; she had been trying for ten months to convince me to move, too.

"Are you sure it's okay for me to be at this party? I mean even though I wasn't invited?"

"Oh, hell, sure. Nobody will even know you're there." She stretched one filmy sheath of nylon out before her, expanded and extended it up and around her right thigh. I had always liked watching her do this; it was a ritual, a tradition for us to chat while she struggled with her hose. When we were in love, she used to pull this act in front of me, to tease me. Now I think she doesn't notice when I'm watching. She says it's the surest sign of trust, to let someone watch you put on your hose. She crouched over and aimed her left foot at the little worm of nylon dangling below.

"You said it's a party for starving artists. Don't you think a well fed copy-editor will stand out like a sore thumb?"

"Oh, Tim, Christ, look at me! I'm no starving artist. Most of my friends are, though, and that's what counts. Barton'll be there, and he's just a starving dancer with a lot of artist friends."

"I thought the term 'artist' was more inclusive than that. I mean, don't dancers consider themselves artists, too?" Linda's foot, having missed the nylon worm for the third time, fell heavily to the floor. She raised it again, hopping to keep her balance.

"Oh, I don't know—here, hold me up, will you? All I know is we're going to this party, and you're going to have so much fun that at midnight you'll be standing on the table, embracing all of Boston and toasting your new town. And anyway, if it makes you feel any better, the only money Barton earns is from selling used car parts on Comm. Ave." The arch of her sharply extended foot met the upper rim of the hose, and the nails caught, scraped the nylon with an uncomfortable rasp, and hung on all the way down. I caught my laughter in my palm, turned it into a cough.

"Damn!" Linda slumped back onto the bed. She let her face fall forward into her hands and sat still. Somebody down the hall was frying fish. Linda's eyes, when she looked up to me from between her fingers, were sad. "Do you think I'd be too earthy if I went there in jeans?"

The party was held in a wobbly townhouse on one of Boston's brickier streets. The hostess, Olivia, worked at the unemployment agency, and she had made some illegal use of the agency's files when compiling the guest list. She knew most of the people's faces without knowing their names.

I held Linda's elbow as we walked by the first table full of shrimps skewered on blue plastic swords. Somebody had already spilled the dipping sauce; it ran from its initial splatter in a thin line down the side of the white paper table cover, making the shrimps seem all the more persecuted.

My gesture was supposed to appear gallant, but Linda knew me too well. "For the love of Pete, get off my arm! Jesus, you're going to blow it before you even start. Don't look so nervous, and don't be scared. If you see anybody you think is cute, tell me and I'll introduce you. Do you know what to say? Jesus, I should have helped you with a line. Your name's nice enough, it could stand on its own in a pinch. 'Hello, I'm Timothy.' That's got more class than 'Hi, I'm Linda' any day."

"I'm just going to stand here and eat shrimp and be quiet. If there's anybody you think I should meet, you bring him over. Give me some kind of warning, though, so I have time to wipe the cocktail sauce off my chin."

"This is Boston, Timmy; you can't do that here! It's not like Baltimore, where *everybody* is standing in a corner somewhere, and you have to wait for everyone to get drunk before anybody meets anybody else. Try to make an impression; you don't have much to lose. God, you could do anything you wanted—you could dance on the table, squash all those poor shrimp, and leave footprints on the party napkins if you wanted to. You'll never see these people again."

"You know I don't dance—"

"Look, there's Bart. Cute, huh?" She winked; it looked foreign to her face. "I'll bring him over; all you have to do is tell him you're from Baltimore, and he'll love you. Can you manage that? 'Hello, I'm Timothy. I'm from Baltimore.' You practice; I'll be right back."

Barton was standing with some other thin young men in front of a small stained-glass window—a picture of a sappy, Bambi-eyed unicorn laying its head in a serene virgin's lap. The young men were all wearing skinny ties and pointy-toed shoes and tailored jackets. Linda looked decidedly earthy in her jeans.

Barton greeted her by lifting his drink and bowing his head; a lime slice smiled from the glass. I could make out the apprehensive, theater-voice sounds of the introductions, and I saw that each member of the circle kept his eyebrows lifted in polite interest as Linda said something about pantyhose.

A woman I guessed to be Olivia stepped in front of me, a dishcloth in her hand, and excused herself as she began to wipe up the shrimp sauce. "Hi, hi, make yourself at home; don't you worry about the sauce—you've got to expect these things to happen when you open your home to a lot of people you barely know. Don't feel bad; there's plenty more in the kitchen." I felt a rush of confused embarrassment as I tried to think of a way to explain that I had certainly not been the one to spill the sauce. She was off to the kitchen, the red-wet paper tablecover bundled under one arm, before I could say anything. I looked at my feet. A scarlet splotch was sinking into the suede of my left Hush Puppy. The stigmata.

"Don't wipe it off; it's all the rage at the Vatican." Barton was before me, smiling, his lip trembling. Linda had been right; I was sorely in need of a line. The embarrassed rush was returning.

"You must be Barton." Damn, why would I say something like that, that made it so obvious he had been discussed? "I'm Timothy; I'm from Baltimore."

He looked intensely and curiously into my eyes as he spoke of some stores near Fells Point that sell the best ceramic pink flamingoes and that generally have unchipped Fiestaware in rare colors—for prices, he said, that I wouldn't believe. "One woman ran a little shop full of dusty things from other people's basements; near the door she had a cardboard box with a sign, written in Magic Marker on a brown paper bag, that said 'Adult Grab Bag—50¢.' It was right next to 'Children's Grab Bag—25¢.' I was feeling wealthy, so I went for the adult strength, and pulled out a rattling little bag, all stapled shut. Inside there was this matching cigarette lighter and case," he reached into his breast pocket and produced the gaudy pair, "and it was just what I was looking for in the first place! I tried to tell the woman that 50 cents was far too low a price for such a set, but she just grinned and rocked in her chair, apparently not understanding a word I said. It was like Christmas!"

Barton smelled good, but not aftershave good. He smelled like Ivory Soap and Windex. His clothes had an air of thrift shop about them, but they were clean and well pressed, and the shoulders and collars stood at sharp angles around his face. I looked at my shoe again. The stain had settled in; there was no longer any point in wiping it off. The tips of my shoes suddenly seemed awkwardly round, and I wondered just when the clothes I was wearing had gone out of style.

We talked for an hour—or he talked and I nodded my head—about Baltimore's Bromo Seltzer clock and about the inferior quality of Boston's shops. Some of the other thin young men, Barton's buddies, joined us, and they were as appreciative of my hometown as Barton was. I felt ashamed that they knew it so much better than I did.

Olivia slipped by, a little Corningware dish of fresh sauce in one hand, and some party napkins in the other. "Sorry it took me so long, boys. You know how things are at parties!" She unloaded her handsful next to the now-empty shrimp plate on the bare table, and moved away to another clump of guests.

A middle-aged man with a short goat-like beard had been talking with great earnestness to Linda all the time I had been with Barton. He approached the shrimp table and took the bowl of sauce. I could smell the coarse wool of his blazer; it had suede patches on the elbows. Linda waited for him, checking the corners of her eyes for sleepers and sniffing, and when he returned to her, he unwrapped a large shrimp from a napkin held tight in his fist, coated it with red sauce, and eased it into her mouth. She closed her lips clumsily around it and giggled. There was a dot of sauce on the edge of her lip.

"Do you think you might move to Boston?" Barton looked genuinely interested in my answer, and his friends looked interested on his behalf.

"Well, Linda thinks I should. I mean, I would like to, and there's nothing holding me back in Baltimore." Damn, I'm dull. "I don't know, though; now that you all have told me how great it is there, I might never want to leave." There, that was a little bit better.

"Okay, well, if you ever need a place to stay, and Linda is. . . indisposed, feel free to call one of us. We'd love to have you."

This sounded to me like a closing line, to be followed shortly with "It was nice to have met you" and a gathering of coats. Barton looked for a place to retire his glass of melted ice and lime; he set it on the shrimp table. I tried to come up with something memorable, something to impress him and his friends more than the fact that I was wearing Brut and a lumberjack shirt.

Then Linda was at the door, one foot in the hallway, with the goat-man's arm around her shoulders. "Bart, do me a favor and show Timmy some sights. I'll see you both tomorrow." She was gone, Barton had his coat on, and I still could not think of anything to say.

In the morning Barton waited until the coffee was ready to pour before he roused me from my place on his couch. The pillow left a grid of indentations on my cheek; I tried to erase them when I washed my face, but my rubbing only made them redder and more irritated.

"What would you like to do today? The whole city is yours, we've got gorgeous weather, and I've been told I'm a really great guide." Barton had grown quiet and shy the evening before; he had said little but grinned a lot as we toured Boston in a taxicab. Now it seemed that he was trying to restore the brave voice he had adopted for the party. It was terribly out of place in his little flat.

There wasn't much furniture in the flat. Every spare corner was occupied by something he had collected, stainless steel or plastic, shiny and smelling of window cleaner. There were kitchen appliances, lawn decorations, souvenirs from Florida, long alligators gleaming a tinny green, wall clocks with grooved, rounded corners, and tables with cobalt-blue glass tops. All of it cool and clean, most of it looking factory-fresh.

Most of all, there were flamingoes. Ceramic and plastic, hovering one-legged on the edges of ashtrays, painted in bold hot pink on black drive-in trays, lined up along ledges, below the medicine chest, above the false fireplace (which was lit by a plastic log filled with orange, flickering light—a gift from his sister Louise, who had introduced Barton to Linda), and around the chrome spice rack in the kitchen.

We decided to go shopping. ("Yeah, it looks like you need some more stuff," I teased.) Barton led us to a street where every person seemed to be moving fast,

like a 33 r.p.m. record played at the old 78 speed. All of these animated people seemed to know my host; his name was shouted from store windows and doorways, from hot pretzel stands and a laundromat.

The air was full of autumn, snappy like tart apples. Barton walked a bit ahead of me, eager, whipping his head from side to side, looking at everything with a sharp eye. He walked just as I would have expected a dancer to walk, with a bounce controlled by long, taut muscle. His bottom was beautiful; hard and small, nut-like. I could have cupped it in my two hands, one buttock fitted compactly into each palm.

The shops he chose looked much like his apartment; by noon, it was hard to look closely at their goods because they all reflected the sunlight so insistently. Some stores had names like "Ye Olde Antique Shoppe" and were full of tall maple hutches and patchwork quilts, but we passed those by without so much as a glance from Barton.

A chubby woman with fat freckled cheeks was selling balloons in an alleyway. She charged toward Barton, hugged him, bumped him in the face with her balloons. I stood back, smiling politely as I was introduced and shuffling my feet as she gushed over him. Looking up, I saw through the broad, dusty window of a toy store a dirty-haired toddler screaming, hurling small pandas at his mother. I excused myself from the balloon-woman and Barton, and entered the store.

When I emerged into the brightness of the street, Barton was waiting, alone, studying a rain-bleached poster pasted to a wall.

"Hi, Barton. I'm back. Listen, um, I want to say thanks for your hospitality and all. . . . I really—well, here." I handed him the crinkly plastic bag that I had hidden behind my back. "I didn't have time to wrap it."

He didn't look surprised, really. He just smiled slowly and glanced up at me, uncertain, as he pulled the stuffed baby flamingo from its bag. It came out stubby legs first, and he turned it over and over in his hands, squeezing its plump belly, petting its neck.

"Oh, this is great, Tim—it's great. Thank you. I really love this. Or—well, no . . . no, I really don't. . . . But it's nice of you. It's awfully nice of you." And right there, in the sunlight, with all those Boston bricks stacked around us, smack in the middle of the smell of French fries and pizza, right there in front of the balloon-woman and that screaming child, Barton took me by the shoulders and hugged me, tight, patting me between the shoulder-blades. And just as suddenly, he let go and set about examining the baby flamingo.

He twiddled its stocky black feet, stared hard at them, the tips of his ears growing pink. "You know, you'd really like it up here. You think you might fly north?"

"Um, well, I'm starting to think I might."

He looked up and grinned, his nostrils flaring slightly. "Move north and be a Bostonian, and eat baked beans every meal, and dump tea in the harbor. Move north—and live happily ever after."

As we began to walk down the street, I wondered if all my stuff would fit in a U-Haul.

* * *

Barton Ramsey has a nightlight in every wall socket. One from his childhood bedroom—an edible-looking flying saucer ringed with neon stripes—is his favorite.

We sleep with the nightlight on, and its light leaves no shadows, just strips and patches of blue and green and orange. I lie awake and squint at the colors, wondering whether my grade school teachers had told the truth when they said that all the colors mixed together would make white.

One edge of the nightlight is jagged, twenty years after a tiny family dog tasted it to see if it might be some sort of food. When I was a kid, my father let us buy a dog, but only if it didn't cost much and if we were quite sure it wouldn't shed. We brought Rowsby home and he cried for two weeks. One school night we all lay awake trying to ignore the shrieks that echoed off the porcelain tile in the bathtub, where my mother had put the little refugee while she cleaned up wet newspapers. Rowsby stopped screaming just before Daddy's threats to get rid of him ceased to be threats. But then Rowsby started to sleep most of every day and every night, and we would watch and listen as he lay with his belly up against the heating duct and wonder why his little mouth kept making sucking motions. Mama explained that it meant that he missed his mother, and that he was pretending that he was still sucking at her teat. (Teat? Is that the same as tit? my brother asked.) We thought Rowsby would grow up and stop pretending so much, but he never did. When he was dying—of old age, the veterinarian said—he became so weak that he just sort of blinked off into unconsciousness, and he looked so pitiful that we could hardly recognize him, except for his drawing in his cheeks and pursing his lips and softly making that sound of wet suction.

I am leaning on one elbow, looking at Barton as he sleeps beside me. The one ear I can see is covered with downy white hairs, that look like they must be the softest things on earth. I run my fingertip lightly around the rim of his ear, down to the lobe and back around again. I am glad we are here.

But Barton's whole mouth is quivering, and there are small sounds. Is he missing his Mama? His mouth moves in little, strange jerks. Oh, I must be tired. My elbow and my shoulder are beginning to ache.

I roll over and nuzzle deep down into my pillow, hoping I will snore.

* * *

We fell into our patterns easily; mostly, I think, because I insist on routines. I can't feel secure unless I know what is to be done when, and unless I can count on things. I felt that Barton merely went along with me to avoid arguments, although I think he found my orderly nature charming at first.

When Barton cooks the dinner, it is my turn to wash the dishes. We could have bought a dishwasher, but I like washing the plates and pots by hand. I take my time at it, going over each piece carefully, beginning with the glasses, the silverware, and the china, loving the patterns and textures of the dishes I brought from home. The plates are bordered with soft rows of colors, purples and browns and greens all working so well together that it is hard to picture them apart from each other. The glasses have delicate etched lines running from base to rim, just deep enough to gather nasty grime. I am careful to clean them well, so that when they stand all lined up on the shelf, they reflect and refract the warm kitchen light.

"You have a peculiar way of doing that."

"Doing what?" I asked, scouring a pot.

"The dishes."

"Hmm. I hadn't realized one way would be any more peculiar than another."

"Oh. Well, your way is peculiar. It's fun to watch: a model of inefficiency."

"I just like to get them good and clean. You're the one who does them wrong."

I *am* particular about the dishes; there is a proper way to get them clean. First, they should be thoroughly rinsed and scraped with a nylon net pad.

"You waste so much time; it's like you wash them twice."

Barton simply dumps all the dishes into the sink, without scraping or rinsing. He likes to wash nearly as much as I do, but he likes it because it gets his fingernails so clean. His nails are broad and short, and very soft. They bend until they break if he doesn't keep them cropped short.

"And instead of running the rag over each plate five times, you could do it just as well in one, maybe two strokes."

Barton's dishes—the Fiestaware plates—are dull for me to wash, because each one is just one big color; no pattern, no design, just YELLOW or BLUE or ORANGE. Whoever painted them must have been blind; there is no evidence that anybody thought about, much less loved, his craft.

"And why bother drying them? They all fit in the rack; you could let them drip and we could use them again in the morning."

"Sweetheart, why don't you see what's on T.V.? I've been doing dishes this way since I was a kid, and my mother did them this way since *she* was a kid."

Barton stood by the Formica table, his hands on his hips, smirking and shaking his head. I took the drying-cloth by two corners, diagonal from one another, twirled it until it was like a rope, and flicked it at my boyfriend's thigh.

The stinging tip slapped his jeans, sent him hopping out toward the sofa, where I met him, minutes later, the dishes safely dried and stacked away.

On Wednesdays I go grocery shopping. I walk in the dusty sunlight that the city exhales before dinnertime, down to Blum's and to the fruitstand and to the fresh fish store that changes its name every two or three weeks, and I return at five-thirty.

On Wednesdays, Barton meets with his buddies in our apartment, and when I get back from my shopping, I sit down with them and join in whatever they are doing. I make a game of wondering what they will look like and what they will say when I open the door. Sometimes their faces all dash up at once, as if their secrets all have to do with me. Other times there is beer on the table and on the stereo and on the television set, and some of the flamingoes are on the floor, replaced for the evening by green glass bottles and ashtrays, and all together the group trips toward the door and hugs me and pets me and asks me won't I have a drink?

Yesterday was Wednesday. As I shifted my brown bag on my hip and dug the keys out of my pocket, I heard singing: loud singing with little concern for melody or harmony but much attention to lyrics and tempo. Barton's thin, desperately boisterous voice lay under the others, following along without competing. I opened the door and stood still, smiling behind the upper edge of my bag, which sliced a clean paper cut on the tip of my nose. Christopher and Vincent and Gary and Paul looked up drunkenly, gleefully, singing exaggeratedly for my benefit:

"When you're with the Flintstones, you'll have a Yabadabadoo time, a Dabadoo time, . . ." then a general raising of beer steins and a comical exchange of glances around the room, "You'll have a gay old time!"

They were expectant at that moment; I was just standing there, intruding on their game, unless I made some move to join in. I lowered my sack to the floor and sang out of tune the last word in that old cartoon theme song: "Thel-ma!"

They had been prepared to laugh with me, to offer me a stein and make a space for me around the table, until I sang. Instead, they all stopped in midraught, confused and vaguely disgusted. Barton managed a grin and said gently, "*Wilma*, Timothy. Remember? Fred Flintstone's wife is named *Wilma*, not *Thelma*."

A long moment later, the others finished their gulps of beer and began to pretend that I had made no mistake, and that they had not reacted the way they had. "Sit down Tim. Get a beer; we were just singing theme songs from all the good old sitcoms. Give it a try—do you remember any?"

I had already picked up the groceries again, and this time I whistled without putting my bag down, the song from "The Andy Griffith Show." I had hardly

pursed my lips and pushed out the first five notes when they all began to laugh again, with far too much enthusiasm.

"We already did that one; try another!"

I ran my lower lip between my front teeth, listened to the deep rumble of its passage, and looked up at the wall clock—a wild-eyed cat with a bright pink plastic tail that wagged from left to right and back again with each second—without noticing the time. I pushed a small laugh out through my nose. "Um, listen, I bought some chips. You all feel like some guacamole?" And I started to cut the avocado as they worked their way through "The Dick Van Dyke Show" song. I hummed along under my breath, and noticed that the light outside had gone orange with the sunset.

That night I excused myself from the festivities and walked over to Linda's just to talk, but almost as soon as I got there, Barton's sister Louise called with the bad news. I ran home, hoping Barton would have sent everybody home, hoping that he would be glad of my company, my support.

The living room was still full of relics of the party when I arrived, but all of the buddies were gone. Barton was sitting in the loveseat, alone, eating a sandwich.

"Barton, I got here as soon as I could. Where is everybody?"

"Huh? Oh, they left right after you did. I was glad, 'cause I was hungry for dinner, and we don't have enough to feed everybody."

I was having a hard time moving from the doorway. "Barton, you okay? What are you going to do?"

"You mean right now? Well, I'm going to finish this sandwich, and then I'm going to try to figure out if I can get this stain off the loveseat myself, or if I'll have to have it done."

"Well, Jesus, Barton—didn't anybody call you or anything?"

"About my mother? Sure, my sister, Louise—well hell, you met her, remember? Louise called me right after everybody had left. She's taking care of everything. How'd you know, anyway?"

"I saw Linda; Louise called her too." I was getting damp around the collar, and my hands wouldn't quit flying around. "Barton, aren't you sad? You don't seem sad."

"Louise said there was no pain; a textbook died in her sleep case."

"Yeah? Yeah. You okay?"

"Sure. Listen, what do you think—I mean about the stain?"

"Well, shit honey, I don't know. I mean, I'm finding this hard to believe. You're *not* sad, are you?"

"What, do you want me to be?"

"I don't know; no, of course I don't *want* you to be. I guess I just expected you to be sad or something. God, Barton, your *mother*."

"She had to die sometime."

"Quit it. Aren't you even going to miss her?"

Barton took a gulp of his beer, a bite of his sandwich. Watched closely as he matched one pointy toe of a shoe with the other. Watched everything but me as he spoke. "Timmy, listen. If she died when I was five, I'd cry. If she died when I was eleven, I'd cry. Seventeen? Sure, I'd miss her. But when was the last time you heard me talk about her? She was my mom; she was a good mom. But she was in my childhood. She was part of that time, and that time was a long time ago. And, when it was over, she was just a woman, and not a very nice one."

Something between my throat and my lungs was making me sick. I couldn't stand there looking at him anymore. "I'll be in the bedroom if you need anything. You probably won't want dinner, will you?"

"No. I'm fine." He stretched out on the loveseat, his shins gangling over the armrest. "And Timmy? Cheer up will you? It's not *your* mother, anyway."

As we faced each other there in the tired streaky light, Barton ran an index finger around the edge of the stain on the loveseat and I stared at him, hard, without blinking, letting my eyes lose their focus, and I mourned Mrs. Ramsey, not as a distant woman lost, but as a comrade replaced in the ranks.

"It's really none of your business, Tim. Save your tears for when *your* mamma goes; Lord knows that'll just about do you in." Barton's voice was escalating by tiny increments. "Just go to bed, will you?"

When I closed the bedroom door behind me, I couldn't cry, I couldn't lie still. I wanted to get out, have some air, but I didn't dare go back through the living room.

I lay on my back for hours, watching the swift silent sweep of headlights through the venetian blinds, watching the little numbered flaps on my digital clock flip over, absently wondering how the gears worked, wondering how hard I would have to shake it to mix the numbers up, or break the flaps, or make the alarm ring and ring without being able to stop it. At a quarter past two, I got up, walked by Barton's nightlight and a small pile of clean socks, went to the closet and drew out my quilt, one my gramma had made, with soft cotton patches of flowered material, strips of cloth from my mama's old nightgowns, a funny white piece from grandaddy's drawers.

I opened the door slowly so I wouldn't wake Barton, tiptoed to the loveseat, hugging my quilt.

"Don't you touch me," he said, lightly fingering the cold corners of an ashtray.

"You'll need this blanket. I brought it for you. And now I'll leave."

"Take it with you. I don't want your blanket."

"You'll need it. The night will be cold."

As I wrapped it loosely around his shoulders, I felt him shiver, and as he did so, he turned from me, the moonlight dusting his cheekbones with gray.

In the morning, I approached him again. Neither of us had slept, and we both had beards and bad breath. I kissed the top of his head, and his hand crept up toward my cheek. We made love silently, tensely, before he went off to work.

"Well Timmy, the way I see it, your problem is that you can't let *anything* go. Like, every change is a tragedy. Barton does stuff wrong, too—but at least he keeps moving. He doesn't waste time looking back; he's always doing something new. Like his Deco collection. He started collecting Deco way before anybody else thought of it. You know why? Because he made up his mind a long time before anybody else did that the time had come to ditch all that high-tech crap—Jesus, remember that? All those tubes and metal things?" As she speaks, Linda is nabbing up little crumbs from the table, plunking a moistened fingertip down over and over, then licking unselfconsciously at the crop she gathers. "Um, Timmy? There're no napkins left. You got any napkins?"

The napkin holder in our kitchen is from a Little Tavern restaurant; it is made of stainless steel, and it dispenses napkins from two sides. The napkins themselves are the long, tall ones with the pleat down the middle; the kind you cannot buy in a store, but must get through a wholesaler. Once we tried buying standard picnic napkins and folding them to fit the slot. Now Barton calls Mr. Wheatley once every six months and orders a half year's supply.

The holder, as Linda has announced, is empty again. I go and rummage, rearranging the radios and clocks and pointy-toed shoes that Barton stores under the bed, trying to get through to the brown-paper bundle of Mr. Wheatley's paper goods. Once the broken toaster etched with Deco designs and some uncle's lizard-skin boots are shifted aside, there is sudden sunlight. No dustbunnies on the floor, just good, pure wood, like grandmothers have in their homes. No linoleum, no Armstrong Solarian. Just wood.

When we are children, we read stories and see pictures and are sure that we will someday have homes with wooden floors and warm bread with butter and cookies with the chocolate chips still liquid after the oven, and there will be room for our toys and for our children, and Pooh Bear will sometimes pop his head out from behind the dresser and Alice will slip in through the mirror.

When we are children, all of our lives will be as our fictions are, and we will not need to dig under the bed for our boyfriend's napkins, because under the bed is only for surprises and secrets and games nobody else can know.

When we are children we are sure that our lives will imitate art, and that the art we know is only a story about real life—we are sure of these things until somebody challenges us, and Pooh and Alice disappear, slip behind the dresser and through the mirror backwards, leaving us filling napkin holders and biting the inside of our cheeks, wondering whether maybe it has always been the other way around, after all.

Patterns in a Glass House *Stephen Young*

Elizabeth Green

Shelly L. Hall

The gravemark is not quite as worn as her body was
when it spilled her daughter into death
her last attempt to mark the world failed
in the failure of birthwet breath
that water the only life in her face
that shine the last given over
by 'Liza to the world.

They buried her in her red dress. Her father cried
her man went silent and guilteyed in his rum.
The neighbors, who gouge and splinter the world
with such worries, whispered that dead was no excuse
for so much red on such a black woman.
Her mama overheard, glared them into shame
saying God and the dark dirt wouldn't mind.
It was her favorite dress.

I lie here by your grave 'Liza. The named granite
and a block of black earth are the only marks
the rusheyed world will see and even these
will soften and sink out of stone
and out of days.
Do you know that I am here?
That I vow on the body of your earth
to hold you in my life a little each day

and to wonder if you feel the sun, warm
as your cheek once was under all kinds of love?
There is grass here 'Liza and dandelion and clover
is this rest what you give, do you take rest
from my hands and breast on the stems and leaves?
There is one red rose here 'Liza, rustling
its skirts in the wind and I hear a song
that you love to sing.

Untitled *Edwin Remsberg*

Extension *Christine M. Kulper*

Ugly

Sara Wildberger

I—A Clear Look

I am in love with silk, with thin Egyptian and Indian cottons. I sew a single ripple of shining white silk onto a caftan of pure white cotton. In the workroom under the harsh lights these bolts of cloth have no flaws to hide. They slip away from my hands when I attempt to stitch them.

I don't look at it often under full light. It's not something you'd want to see. I have the skin of a junkie, worse, an old faggot. With skin like a mask I could be as beautiful as the girls in Vogue, as the girls in the rock videos on the screens only twenty-four inches wide. I could pass and I could make some real money.

In the car with Vince I am careful not to look at him. You could be a model, he says. If you starve yourself and lose that little bit of fleshiness there—he touches my jaw—but no, I'd be very angry with you if you starved yourself.

It costs a lot of money to repair a face, I say. I look at the ground most of the time. I don't want them to see it. There's a bright light hitting me in the corner of my eye and I'm sure it makes me look terrible.

You don't need any repair, he says. But you shouldn't wear all that makeup.

I smile down. We're drunk and on our way in the door of another party if we can get out of the car. I hate talking about my ugliness but I have to do it. Like an obese person who jokes about her inablility to get through narrow passages.

It's my skin. Don't let anyone say I can't look on the good side. On my body my skin is fine, it can slip away from any hand that would touch it. It's the skin on my face. If it were a question of reshaping the bones I would find a way to make the money to do it. But the structure is sound. My eyes are large and shining, my cheekbones even and high.

Beneath them the cheeks have been mauled. They are as spongy and pockmarked as an old drunkard's. But it wasn't years of drinking really that did it to me. I was afraid of a lot of things I saw. My face has dozens of red pitted scars.

Don't get me wrong I've never been beaten. In my neighborhood there were growing things and space but in my house in my room the air was bad. I grew up hard. I was there by myself and I've never learned not to be scared by what I see.

My face is as reddened and rough as those who've spent their lives at sea. No matter what I do, a few hairs grow from my face, hard like a man's. I know it's not something you want to see.

If it were a question of reshaping the skull I'd say o.k. But it only got to my skin, it didn't get to my bones. Ugly is only skin deep but that's deep enough.

Men either hide their pity and allow me a facsimile of dignity—don't tell me you've never done it and felt like you were something special because of it too—or they hit me again. The sick ones do that. I like them better. I understand that they are like me, only impatient with themselves. I have been hurt but I am being a good sport about it.

"I find it hard
To believe you don't know
The beauty you are. But
If you don't
Let me be your eyes
Light up your darkness
Show that you're whole.
When you fear the light has left your mind,
That inside you're wasted and unkind
Let me stand and show that you are blind
Please put down your hands—
Because I see you—I do—
I'll be your mirror. . ."

II—Those who can, do.

Chrissie plays with the objects in front of her on the table: a pack of cigarettes, a corkscrew, a butter knife. We've come to this house to see her, because she was not invited to the party we'd just been to at Joe's. Christmas brings out the worst in people. Chrissie and Joe have been feuding since their breakup two months ago. Jeri and I were at Joe's until midnight; we came to this house later, to see Chrissie.

"Fess up, children," she says. "What was it like?"

At Joe's there was gourmet food and a video camera and cable TV that showed rockstars all night long. At Joe's we were not allowed to smoke unless we went out on the balcony. Joe had coke but he was being secretive with it and he only shared it with two girls there.

"What did he say?"

Joe is picky about people. He hadn't excluded Chrissie out of any vindictiveness, he explained, but only because it was a special party for him, a chance to be with special friends and relive good memories. Only good memories, he said. He was trying hard to look relaxed. He couldn't quite bring it off.

But on Chrissie, anger looks beautiful. Her eyebrows pull together in a shape like a seagull's wings; she is outraged, her integrity is threatened. Suddenly she smiles.

"Did he like it?" She pushes the objects on the table around like a conman would with a shell game. She had given us a present to give to Joe. He had opened it and asked us to thank Chrissie. The gift had been a cheap sort of joke book, called *The Young Professionals Handbook*.

Joe had broken with Chrissie because she refused to leave her job. Chrissie is a dancer in a peep show behind an adult bookstore on 14th street.

This is what she told me about her work:

We were waiting to board a plane. We hadn't seen each other in two months. That morning she had called me and told me that a man she knew had a dozen extra spaces on a charter for Atlantic City. He had told her to invite some friends. It was a charter full of his salesmen who were getting a free trip because they'd done a good job. The boss himself would not be able to make the trip but he wanted the plane to look lively. We were also being given dinner and rooms for the night and some money to have fun with at the tables.

She used to work in a go go bar. She said she got tired of having to hustle drinks in between dancing sets. "The way I look at it," she said, "I give my all in the dancing. I just don't have it in me to give that much, to have to deal with them on the floor, to do all the talking and then get stuck with someone who doesn't really have that much money.

"The only communication I do now is like this: they say 'Spread it' and give me a five.

"Have you ever been to a peepshow, Helen?"

I shook my head.

She blew smoke at the ceiling. "At first," she said, "I didn't realize what was going on. I stand on a platform in a room where there are these little doors for the men to look through and little holes for them to stick their money through. I have to put my own money in the jukebox so I'll have something to dance to. I usually spend about $30 on the jukebox every night. I usually make between $150 and $300 a night. When they stick their money through the hole, I come over and dance for them. What do you think a man would do in the little booth he sits in?"

"I don't know," I said, smiling mildly. Chrissie has a good sense of timing. She is a very fine actress at her college; she appears for the most part in plays by Genet, Pinter, Ionesco, Brecht. She takes her style of delivery from them. She never abandons precision and a certain affectedness and repetition of gesture. These gestures are unrelated to her speeches, but they amplify her meanings nonetheless.

She blew smoke at the ceiling again. "They beat off. Isn't that horrible? I don't see how they can do it in those cramped little booths. One after another. They know there were men before them and there will be more after them. It doesn't matter to them. They are grotesque. Pathetic. They have no self-

respect. Jimmy says it's worse for him because he has to clean the booths out every night.

"There's a video camera shooting me all the time. They have a monitor over the cash register at the bookstore. It's so the cops can see that there's no prostitution going on, the men never touch me or anything. It also brings customers in. But there are some places where you can stand where the camera can't get you.

"A lot of men—even the one that's running this Atlantic City thing—they don't like me working there. Even when they get off on my dancing, they don't want me at the peep show. Because men couldn't beat off when I was dancing at the club. They had to be civilized. There were no scummy booths with little wooden holes in them.

"But I like this better. I don't have to say a word."

Tonight she straightens her spine and pushes objects around. This is Alan's house. It has been a refuge for all of us from time to time. I lived here for three months; Jeri lived here for a year. Alan has a soft spot for wayward hippies and acid casualities and young girls too. He has taken Jeri and me to buy wine. Jeri bought good expensive wine and a corkscrew too, because she said she needed one for her purse and she might as well get it as long as she was here, right? It was expensive. Alan knows what she's up to. He smiles indulgently and pays up anyway.

I take a cigarette out of my pocket. "Don't you dare," says Chrissie, pushing the pack in front of her over to my side of the table. They are Alan's cigarettes. I shrug and tap the pack on the table and take one out and light it. Chrissie straightens her spine and says imperiously, "Put them in your pocket." I do. "You might as well make this a profitable evening," she says.

I can't imagine what they do with all that money. Food and shelter are costly, of course. After that come costumes.

Chrissie saves. "I'm saving for a rainy day," she says. "I'm saving for my old age."

When I used to dance, I spent the money on drugs. It was those nights that killed my looks. I don't do any of that anymore. I've cleaned up my act. I have a respectable position. So they say. I couldn't stand dancing. The pimps always bothered me. Once one told me: "Now, you're making more money than anyone else here. You better go for it now. Then you can afford to be your own boss. Set yourself up as a fashion designer, a real estate agent, anything you want. Cause in a couple years your tits be sagging and nobody be giving nothing for you."

That was two years ago. When I fell apart and quit dancing, Alan took me in and helped me get a grant and a real job and go back to school. Now I'm learning fashion design.

III—Absolutely free.

You know that old joke. They say, does your face hurt? You say, no, why. They say, because it's killing me.

My face is killing me.

Jeri and I go out on the town tonight. We're at a nightclub where they show rock videos. It's ladies night.

I don't like these places. They've got mirrors everywhere.

Jeri comes back from the DJ booth. "I made a request for us," she says. "When it comes on, I want to dance with you."

"Thanks," I smile. She wants to make me feel happy.

At the bar, there's a man bothering us. His face is broad and round as the moon. "I try to take the good with the bad," he says.

"Well, there you go," he says. "One day you're up and the next day you're down." He's shouting at us over the music.

"It's a good career. No matter what you do, you can fall back on it. It's a valuable skill that you can use in all walks of life."

"Please go away," I say. But my voice is normal and so no one hears it. "Oh won't you please go away...go away..."

I stare resolutely at the bar, at my cigarette. Jeri keeps looking at me and smiling secretively. I roll my eyes. She shrugs like she's saying "I know, but..."

He senses he's losing us so he buys Jeri a drink and of course he has to buy me one too. So I have to look at him and smile like I'm listening to him again.

Our request comes on. It is a beautiful song. I know Jeri requested it to make me feel better.

"Me and Helen have to dance now," she says to him. He follows us onto the floor though he wasn't invited. We have the upper floor to ourselves, and I want to swoop through the space with both arms open but he keeps getting in the way. He wants it to look like he's dancing with us both. He tries to mimic the arabesques we make with our arms. I want to cry. His clumsiness is breaking my heart. He is ruining the beauty of the song. I can't make a full piroette without finding him there, smack in front of me, flapping his arms like a big dodo bird. "I hate you, go away, leave me alone, I hate you!" I say under my breath.

I turn and face the wall. Nothing but white. I rock back and forth in rhythm, barely dancing, just moving.

"A sound formed in a vacuum may seem a waste of time
It's always been just the same.
No moving, no breathing, no color no lyrics,
Just nothing..."

Back at the bar I buy myself another drink. I turn on my stool and stare into the crowd. I watch a young Japanese man. His hair is flat black and cut straight across his forehead. His face is clear. His shoes are black with white laces. His white socks are immaculate beneath the crisp edge of his black levis.

Next to me at the bar is a man with a scraggly beard. He is drinking coffee. "Bullshit," he says, when he sees me looking at him.

I'm taken aback, but he can't really be talking about me or trying to put me down, because he's half smiling and trying to hold my eyes with his gaze.

"An astute observation, but the reference escapes me," I say.

"Bullshit," he says again. He didn't hear me.

"In reference to what?" I say, shouting over the music. "What is bullshit?"

"The music," he says, pointing at the ceiling.

"I don't like you.
I don't like you, town.
I don't wanna like you.
I'll shop around. . ."

"Oh," I say. "Well it's not my favorite."

"She's a marketing ploy," he says, leaning foreward on his stool. "Malcolm MacLaren is a pernicious bastard. He's the one who started selling Sex Pistols costumes to all the people here." He waves his hand over the crowd.

"That's what makes Johnny Lydon so fucking admirable. He used to be Johnny Rotten, you know. But he got out of MacLaren's hands and formed a band called Public Image Limited and made a song called "Public Image—"

"I know that song. Are you a DJ or something?"

"No, I just like music. But do you see how great that is? He just gave it all back at them. He keeps holding up a mirror to the whole industry to show them what shits they are. But MacLaren keeps raking in the cash, selling little girls like her—" he pointed to the ceiling— "and pirate and cowboy fashions. My god. Get your Annabella Lewi lunchbox here!"

"She's very beautiful," I say. I always think you should stick up for people who are beautiful because they have such a hard time.

"It's all done with mirrors," he says. "It's bullshit. It's a trick."

I think of a picture I saw of her. She was in an open field, holding up a white towel over her body, as if she had just gotten out of the shower. I had been struck by the incongruity of the long grass against the white towel.

"Wild—" she sang,
"Go wild
Go wild in the country
Where snakes in the grass
Are absolutely free."

The man with the beard smiles at me. "I like those clothes," he says. "You must have spent a lot of money for those clothes."

"No," I say. "I make everything myself. Excuse me a second."

I go into the bathroom and try to patch up my makeup. I can't do it. I go into one of the stalls and throw up in the toilet. It's over very quickly and quietly.

I go back to the sink and rinse my mouth out many times with cold water. I patch my makeup up right this time and go back to the bar.

I'm sick of the smoke and the orange and blue lights. I'm going away this weekend coming up. This guy I'd met when I was dancing, John, has a farm in West Virginia. Actually it's his father's place. His father made a lot of money in the CIA and bought a mountain with it. There's a small house and a vegetable garden but the rest of the land is untouched.

I'd remained friends with John. He was the only one I'd stayed friends with that I'd met at that job. He didn't talk much. He went out to the farm every weekend and sat on the porch and got high and watched the trees. Then he would get up and repair a window, or fix some food, or chop some wood.

He understood about me and he didn't even look at me very much. There was no one up there to see me. I could think clearly.

When I went up there I brought my tent. I camped on top of the mountain, in the clearing. When it was hot, I spent the day sitting on the rocks in the stream. When it was cold, I watched the sky. During the day it was clear and blue. At night the stars were sharp. There was nothing to get in the way of looking at them.

Lyrics quoted "I'll Be Your Mirror" by the Velvet Underground, "Your Silent Face" by New Order, "Wild in the Country" by Bow Wow Wow

Aquatic Study #2 *Michael Oakes*

Portrait of a Name

David Hall

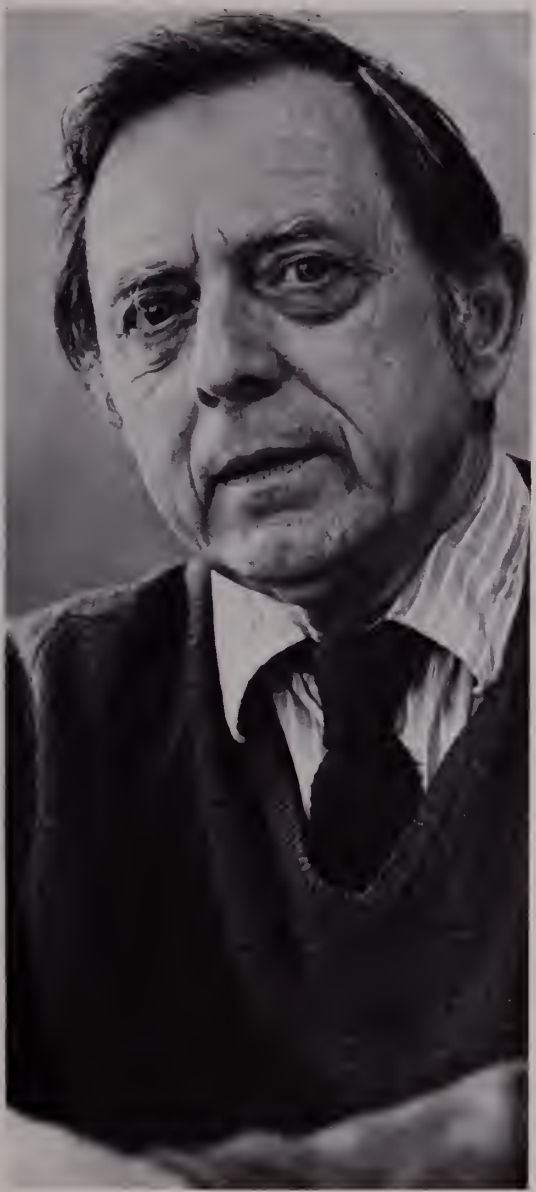

PHOTO BY JACK KODIKARA

Edward Reed Whittemore. Imagine someone calling him Eddie...or E. Reed (by an old Nixon staffer)? Several years ago an issue of *Calvert* was dedicated to a Reed *Whitemore*. I suppose the address which would freeze all those laugh lines the most would be "Professor" Whittemore. He is never Professor simply because he is Reed, simply because he was Professor, probably, at age ten. In a creative writing workshop I once called him Sir—he does tend to extract that southern epithet every now and then (actually I had wanted to call him Sirrah; he had just tossed a blousy romantic poem of mine in the can). Reed, a grin on his face more often than not, always remains the man without a pose, a real phenomenon as

faculty members go—no beards, broad A's, or academic feathers here—just a laugh, a laughter as close as you can get to utter abandon, a kind of music maybe, a Re he he he hee heed, or as the man said, ". . . the mind makes music sometimes/ Not words" ("The Self-Made Man" V).

Four decades ago there was a Captain Whittemore (Twelfth Air Force) holding forth in a Naples petrol supply base which Irwin Touster (then Private T.), who supplied drawings for Reed's *Heroes and Heroines*, describes as closer to Heller than hell. Reed, not quite a Captain Yossarian, became so bored with the ringing phone, its static, its five simultaneous voices that he snatched the crank, the metal box, all the wires, and without so much as a yawn, gracefully dropped it all in the trash. This little story along with others by those who knew Reed in the *Furioso* and *Carleton Miscellany* days appears in a 1970 issue of *Voyages*. It sticks with me, because it shows the man—even at age 24—has style, a kind of singular panache, like his poetry, much more than just wit, a kind of, well, Whittemore.

Since the old New York brokerage days I've stayed away from martinis, yet with this man called Reed, in the faded red interior of a restaurant that calls itself Chinese, along with a very serious, very plump lady from the Univ. of Texas, I decided to try the old gin and olives again. He held me out to be not only a poet, but somewhat of a Yeats scholar, the latter happening to be his favorite poet. Trying to imitate his total unflappableness, I mumbled something about a Steinach operation to which the lady blanched and Reed laughed. "Cheers," I said, and we clinked oversize art deco glasses to the sound of trucks rattling along Route 1, to the soundless confidence, absurd yet wryly serious, of teacher in student.

Reed, a thing of woodwinds, something whereby the mouth can make music. In an age of hands-on poetry, of workshop metaphors and "process," it is nice to have his songs around; they are, as so many so often have said, "unique"—but simply because the man is so.

Editor's note: Reed Whittemore was born in 1919 in New Haven, Connecticut. He was editor of *Furioso* and *The Carleton Miscellany*. From 1964-1965, he served as Consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress. He has been awarded the Harriet Monroe prize from *Poetry*, the Award of Merit of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a major grant from the National Institute of the Arts, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Reed Whittemore is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. This summer, he is leaving the University of Maryland after sixteen years as Professor of English.

Still Life

I must explain why it is that at night in my own house,
Even when no one's asleep, I feel I must whisper.
Thoreau and Wordsworth could call it an act of devotion;
Others would call it fright. It is probably
Something of both. In my living room there are matters
        I'd rather not meddle with
Late at night.

I prefer to sit very still on the couch watching
All the dead things of my daytime life—
The furniture and the curtains, the pictures and books—
Come alive,
Not as in some childish fantasy, the chairs dancing,
But with dignity,
The big old rocker presiding over a silent
And solemn assembly of all my craftsmen,
From Picasso and other celebrities gracing my walls
To the local carpenter benched at my slippered feet.

I find these proceedings
Remarkable for their clarity and intelligence, and wish
        I might somehow
Bring into daylight the eloquence, say, of a doorknob.
But always the gathering breaks up; everyone there
Shrinks from the shock of confronting
A cough, a creaking stair.

A Porch Chair

He has been sitting up straight in a chair on a porch
With his eyes closed,
And has felt the floor underneath him tip, as in sailing.
He hates sailing.
His friends who are sailors tell him that sailboats are built
To tip,
But when they insist on their point he tells them that he
Is no sailboat,
And would rather stick to the ways of his unlaunched forebears
By standing or sitting up as his forebears did—
Straight.

They laugh.
They have always said he was wonderfully witty
But insincere, and with justice, for he
Doesn't hate sailing really, and so they take him
Out and he howls as they tip, and they have a fine time
Watching him perched on the side reaching for straightness,
And howling.

But now it is not like this; he is not playing.
He sits on his porch holding tight, with his eyes closed,
As the wind freshens.

Clamming

I go digging for clams once every two or three years
Just to keep my hand in (I usually cut it),
And whenever I do so I tell the same story
Of how at the age of four I was trapped by the tide
As I clammed a sandbar. It's no story at all
But I tell it and tell it; it serves my small lust
To be thought of as someone who's lived.
I've a war too to fall back on, and some years of flying,
As well as a high quota of drunken parties,
A wife and children; but somehow the clamming thing
Gives me an image of me that soothes my psyche
Like none of the louder events: me helpless,
Alone with my sandpail,
As fate in the form of soupy Long Island Sound
Comes stalking me.

I've a son now at that age.
He's spoiled, he's been sickly.
He's handsome and bright, affectionate and demanding.
I think of the tides when I look at him.
I'd have him alone and sea-girt, poor little boy.

The self, what a brute it is. It wants, wants.
It will not let go of its even most fictional grandeur
But must grope, grope down in the muck of its past
For some little squirting life and bring it up tenderly
To the lo and behold of death, that it may weep
And pass on the weeping, keep the thing going.

Son, when you clam,
Watch out for the tides and take care of yourself,
Yet no great care,
Lest you care too much and brag of the caring
And bore your best friends and inhibit your children and sicken
At last into opera on somebody's sandbar. Son, when you clam,
Clam.

The Bad Daddy

The bad daddy who has been angry with the whole family, one by one,
Now retires to his study to be sullen and think of death.
He has aches in his neck and stomach that he is afraid to see the doctor about.
He has a sense of his mind's slopping off into fuzz.
He feels that he is becoming allergic to cigarets,
That he can't digest steak, that he needs glasses, that he is impotent.
He knows he is bored by his friends, bored by novels, Shakespeare, youth.
He thinks that if it rains one more day he will kill himself.
He lies on the cot in his study covered by a child's security blanket too short to sleep under,
And he improvises idly, a few two-minute commercials for a different life, thus:

Dear Son: In the war between the Earthmen and the Martians,
Keep your feet dry, your messkit clean, your weapons oiled.
Get plenty of sleep, drink not nor fornicate, speak
When spoken to, write home once a week, get to know your chaplain.
If upon your return I should be wandering amid the shades of the departed,
Call the president of the bank who will deliver to you
A sealed manila envelope containing three french hens, two turtle doves
And your further instructions. Vale. Your sire.

Dear Mathilda: Though we have not spoken a word to each
other for thirteen years,
We are sympatico, you and I. We commune across the miles,
we yearn; we dote.
I watch you drive away in your furs in the Rolls to the
shoe shop,
I hear you banging pots and pans in the bunker,
And my heart woman, twitches and the salt tears come,
Tum-te-tum. Your Daddy-o.

Dearest Daughter: It was good, awfully good to have that
nice little note from you.
Jimmy danced up and down; Mamma had tears in her eyes.
We pulled out the scrapbook
And found that the last time you wrote was your fifteenth
birthday,
When you were pregnant. Remember?
And now you write that you've won the Insurgents' Prize.
And at Berkeley! Of course we're terribly proud.
But as old-fashioned moralists we doubt the wisdom of
compliments,
And anyway you should know that your mother and I
Really think you're a frightful bitch. Love, Dad.

So now the bad Daddy feels much much more like himself.
His typewriter pants pleasantly in its shed; the beast is fed.
Down the long waste of his years he sees, suddenly, violets.
He picks them and crushes them gently, and is at peace.
Gettem all, bad daddy, and sleep now.

The Departure

The artist must leave these woods now.
He must put his books and files back in the car,
And stuff his bags with shirts and shorts and sweaters,
And clean his room and take a load to the dump, wherever
the dump is,
And go the rounds and say goodbye to the artists—goodbye—
And the trees—goodbye—
And cash a check and fill up with gas and set out
For the world again, the world, to talk up art.

The world likes that.
It likes to get news of the spirit fresh from the woods,
What birds are saying and frogs. It sits in its cities,
Thirsty. The artist will fix that.
He will bring in a carload of essences quick on the thruway,
Mists for everyone's parlor, sunsets, done up nice.
Cities want their essences done up nice.

So the artist must leave these woods now. For that.
He takes a last walk in the woods: what is the news, woods?
And the woods reply in their woodsy way that the news
Is woods, woods.
He hears the news, notes it down and walks back
To his shirts and sweaters while out of the sky
Art in its arty way keeps saying: goodbye.

What Was It Like?

What was it like? I can tell you what it was like.
We were sitting and drinking, drinking.
We ticked off all the hatreds of our acquaintance.
We banished the sky from the heavens and it was like death.

And what was death like?
Death, I can tell you now, was like being.
Death was 45, alcoholic, rational,
With the smoke curling up from the fingers, the words
from the mouth,
And the wife sitting prim in the corner watching the world end.
Death was all that crap in somebody's living room
On a Saturday night on the circuit with plates in the laps.

We put on our coats and stumbled out to the car
And made it home to the babies and paid the baby-sitter
And lay down at last and slept. It was like that.

Jane Jane

Since I was sixteen and so was she,
Neither of us knew what she wanted from a man until she
Went off with a county judge who was forty.
There was much to learn in that lost city of our puberty.
We were surrounded by horsechestnut trees, professors and
millionaires.
We ate Good Humors, smoked Camels and went to Bela Lugosi
movies at the Loew's Poli.
Sometimes we were so blind that we could not see the blue sky
through our veins,
And so ignorant that when the small birds called who were our
futures,
We knew not where to go in our cars for their feed.
Yes we were a caution of unwisdom in our city,
Which turned out to be after all not so much a city
As a sort of desert bus stop on the road to what would be palms
But in the meantime was road always, road merely.

Jane Jane
Walk in the rain
The wetter your skin
The more your brain

Could it be that I should have chosen Jane rather than Nina
As my partner in the waltz, Nina
Who was taller than I and led me beautifully
In a chandeliered ballroom of official Olympic size
To first prize in the waltz but not a step further, Nina
Who was not for me and her eyes moved away and settled on Tony,
Sam or Jeremy
When she loped with me?
Oh if Nina, Margaret, Sally, Jane and the others
Were now to be standing with me in all that gilt and claptrap,
Biting a lip and pouting and pushing a shoulderstrap,
It would be Jane that I would choose, Jane for the big waltz.

Jane Jane
I would fain
Live my loon
With you again

And so she left, or so I heard, that county judge,
And I heard no more.
Now I am so wise that when I go to bed I know how many hours
I will sleep,
And know too that no matter who my partner is I no longer have
much waltz within me.
Yet I have not learned yet
Any more than the lost city taught
Of what I should reach to reach
And want to want.
Jane was snide, yare, fickle, foolish, svelte,
And if she was only a plain little rich bitch
Quick on her feet,
Still she was sweet,
And she lived only two houses up the street.

Jane Jane
Sugar cane
Novocaine
Down the drain

To My Desert

What is the music of Monday in Mesopotamia?
Chimneys chuffing?
I doubt it.
Old Mes has been moody and massively morbid
Since the dwindle—
Surcease mostly,
Sands in the sassafras shifting,
Doodle.
As if you had asked.
Why don't you ask,
Why is Tuesday dried beef in dreaded Dakota?
But you don't, do you? Despise you,
I. You don't know how crowded my kitsch is
With the wisdom of Wednesday,
The thirst of Thursday,
Friday's fritter
(with bitter butter).
But you don't ask,
Stupid,
And I see that the secretions of Sat and Sun wdnt send you
Too.

The Dark Comedian

Merrill Leffler

It has been said often enough that Reed Whittemore is an ironic poet; his work is also variously satiric, bitter and mocking of pretensions of all kinds, the self's and others. These qualities—to the extent that Whittemore takes them—are rare in American poetry. Who can say why? An inherent lack of wit in our poets? Not (ah hem) profound enough for serious poetry? Irony and satire can be deceptive, masking that which is not always evident on the poem's surface—a dark seriousness at the center, sometimes melancholic and powerfully nostalgic for something which is never named, only implied. What that something is is difficult to say. It has to do with lost promises, I think, that have been betrayed by just about everything in modern life, from society to poetry to the poet himself.

So what are we to make of all this: the irony together with deep sentiment that has, strange to say, the faint echo of Wordsworth. And need we make anything of it? I think so—because Reed Whittemore's work, while it is well known and widely anthologized, has created a voice that is uniquely his in the poetry of these last thirty years. And I don't know if that voice has had the kind of attention it deserves.

On the one hand, the poems often have the feel of talky meditations—sometimes lyrical, often narrative—of a mind which reacts to each day's perturbations, from G-rrr, getting up each morning and going off to teach the "Mercantile Main Street Babbitt/Bourgeois-barbaric faces" to the demands of family life to the banalities of American commercialism to the fierce mindlessness that attends middleclass routine. On the other hand, however, there is an understated moral fervor that gives direction to the seemingly quirky paths these poems travel from satire to anger to bitterness to sentiment. It is a path that owes itself, like most modern poetry, to the geography marked out by Wordsworth, Whitman, and Williams. But where Whittemore separates himself from so many of his contemporaries is his indebtedness to Byron. I don't mean this as any direct influence as much as a sensibility.

It is the Byron of *Don Juan*, the Byron who at the beginning of a stanza is capable of inhaling the world's grandeur and by its end exhaling mockery at such lofty—call it pretentious—feeling. It is the Byron whose yearning would like to believe that poetry is, ah, the unacknowledged legislator of the world but whose skeptical otherself mocks the pomposity such poetry would lay claim to.

Whittemore, of course, is no Byron. Byron did not wear tweeds and was not a university professor; he did not shop in supermarkets; he did not apply for Guggenheims or go off to writer's conferences. He was not middleclass where "the children shriek under his window" and "the days are a junkshop":

> the hours in fragments,
> His desk still cluttered with coffee cups, Longfellow, stamps,
> His room getting hotter and hotter,
> And noises, distractions, chores, bills, visitors
> Thrusting themselves upon him....
>
> ("The Renaissance Man")

Still, inhabiting Reed Whittemore's work—like Byron's—is both the yearning for what could be and the anger (often at the self for the naivete of such yearning) that is moved to mockery, laughter, and bitterness. Nevertheless, in some recess of the body that we sometimes call the soul, the mind believes. In what? Something. He won't say, for to say is to mess it up. And that silence is in Whittemore's poems from the beginning, as in "Still Life." "To name is to kill," said Mallarme, but if he and the symboliste poets took as their charge to have poems evoke the unsayable, Whittemore's sensibility will not mess with it:

> If there is love
> and I think there is
> It survives the saying only with difficulty
>
> It needs prayer rather
> I will not play with it.

There is underneath this work—and even in the poetry of bitterness—the tugging of reverence; it resides in the deeper structure from which Whittemore's poems are made and gives them something more than simply wit and satire. It gives them a soul.

* * *

There are poets, who, like prophets, are visionaries: they speak to us not of what we are but of what we can be, the near impossibility of sainthood. But there are poets—Reed Whittemore is one of them—who remind us of what we are and who do not sidestep the crazy, contradictory feelings that all of us, every day, experience. "The mind wears many hats, many different wares," Whittemore writes; "It is quick, slow, open, secret, crammed with jokes, prayers./It knows what it knows deep." There is a depth in Reed Whittemore's work that often comes in lighthearted guise. In listening we will carry away with us the comedy, yes—it gives us good cause to laugh at ourselves; if we listen hard enough, we will recognize our own mystery and silence, and that recognition in its own way gives a strange solace.

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King's College Choir

G.A. Cate

Beneath the luminous stained glass
In this strong station of eternity
The music-master rages his baton
While choir-boys snigger in their sleeves.
Then at once, as if in spite, they sing
The ancient blended tones. Their voices
Flow from silent Norman moats across
Our ranks, and capture our touring ears.

The color and the sound surround me.
The candles and the brasses shoot a light
That hangs serenely in the fan-vault overhead,
And I am snugly lost in beauty. But my young
Son by my side breaks in with fidgets and with
Clanking toys. I burn to take my tyrant's hands
And throttle him. How can he feel so little at
This hour? How can he ply his mundane life
At this unearthly plane? If I could talk I'd
Shout him back to birth.

Henry the Eighth could make or break a church,
Yet never conquered this one.
And Hitler never bombed Cambridge
Because he wanted it to be his throne
When he had won the world.
Now they function as manure here
For the stone pillars to flower a thousand years.

Then, while I sit and lour in a fuddled lump,
My little boy by my side
Takes leave from his toy tanks
And asks, "Why did God make things
So beautiful?"

The music seeps through the velvet like the sweat
    on my fists
That open on my military belly.
So it is here that all the histories of powered men
    and checkered times
Should slowly fade together into one pure note
Piped by these boys
Across the mortified rows.

I rise and move away from my son's blessed question.
The sound waves quiver my regal beard
And shadows scamper to my face like naughty boys
To blacken my moustache.

Buffalo *Eric Nicholson*

The Carnivorous Carnival

Marty Drake

Scene one: *The Carnivorous Carnival is childhood in the hands of an adult, and there is nothing more dangerous.*

ANDY SAVIOR. I've got to get away, just to be alone for a while. Really alone, without soup or candy or anything with lists of their ingredients. Shampoo for instance. I've read that label a hundred times, but couldn't tell you right now what's in it.

MANY BADNESS. You say that all the time Andy, but every morning there you sit with the cereal box turned sideways and I know you're not memorizing the cookie recipe.

ANDY. I know. I get like a surgeon who won't tell his patients what he's about to do to them. I mean, he's got this knife and he cuts up tons of them, but he'd rather be a horse jockey, except he's too big for that, but anything.

MANNY. Such as?

ANDY. A whittler in a toothpick factory or a bender in a paper clip plant. I mean anything without a height requirement. But it's me! I need a break, without a pen or my specimen bottles or anything.

MANNY. You keep on saying that Andy, but there you go writing something down again.

ANDY. It's just a phone number.

MANNY. Whose?

ANDY. Mine.

MANNY. Christ!

ANDY. Look at me. I don't even cry when I lose things anymore. I just replace them with other things. Preferably with small things from Japan, but sometimes with homemade things from farmers markets. I don't worry about warranties and I don't even admire poor people anymore.

MANNY. It's the thing now not to admire poor people. No one could figure out how to become poor it they weren't already. It's like a cab driver who keeps his permit next to his meter.

ANDY. I was just thinking that. He's got this meter going all night and day, and his picture is always up there saying nothing.

MANNY. Pictures can't talk.

ANDY. Exactly. One time I drew a picture of a woman, but the only way I could make it like a movie was by jiggling it around. It ended up like a dance, me jiggling about with this picture in my room, making her move around.

MANNY. Yeah?

ANDY. Yeah. Now I just keep track of how much I'd cry if I weren't happy.

MANNY. I think God gets like that. It seems that the only really bad thing that's ever happened to him was when his son was murdered. His son was Jesus.

ANDY. Yes, I know.

MANNY. And that's the only bad memory he has. Now I guess he just sits around figuring out his gas mileage.

ANDY. Does he play much solitaire?

MANNY. I don't know.

ANDY. I feel like an old Plaid Man who walks around the city ranting and raving about solitaire, and everyone thinks he's crazy, but he's

not. It's just that he loves solitaire but can't afford a deck, or doesn't like the designs on the backs of the ones he's seen in stores.

MANNY. I wouldn't buy it if I didn't like the design.

ANDY. Of course not. Or an old woman who's real fat and keeps winning at Bingo every Monday night, until her friends think she's rigged the game and begin to hate her. Then she gets so depressed she tries to stab herself, but all her knives are very dull except one, and she's grown too fat to reach the shelf that it's on. So she keeps going back to the Bingo games, so no one will slight her for quitting while she's ahead, but she keeps on winning.

MANNY. Maybe she should try rigging the game so she'll lose.

ANDY. She tried that, but someone saw her do it and thought the worst.

MANNY. That's a tough situation.

ANDY. It is.

MANNY. But even God doesn't run his business by staying away from high speed railroad tracks. True, he won't go out and lie on them, but sometimes he crosses without thinking to look both ways. I mean to say, things tend to slip by us all the time without stopping to explain themselves, so stop trying to justify your presence to every crossing guard and birdwatcher you see. Go somewhere, anywhere, and buy every tie in their town.

ANDY. I don't look good in ties.

MANNY. Christ! Andy, stop putting your eyes on a spoon and dipping them in dirty dishwater. Have fun, be alone if you can. Send me a urinal. I'll give you a box you can ship it back in.

Scene two: *The Carnivorous Carnival is missing the point.*

MANNY. What are you taking with you?

ANDY. Not much. I'd really like to take this window. Can you give me hand with it?

MANNY. Sure. Have you decided where to go?

ANDY. [*Struggling with the window.*] I'm catching a bus in a couple hours to...Umph...Marrow Borough...Unnnik...This is really in there.

MANNY. Sure is...Oommp...Just don't buy any...Oof, here...Pull that end...Don't buy any rope.

ANDY. Oullmunnk.... It's a shame the way I.... Oops, you okay?...buy rope. Lift it there.... God knows what I do with all the.... No, no, there... rope I buy. I get a hundred feet and.... Ummg, pull!...next thing I know, I'm back off to the.... Org... rope store. Do you think I should take some... there, now lift...water with me?

MANNY. They will have water....Hold it, now pull...wherever you travel.

ANDY. I suppose.... Pull.... Aahh, we got it!... I suppose they'll have windows too.

MANNY. Yeah, but this is a nice one.

Scene three: *The Carnivorous Carnival, sitting in the back of the bus, is making too much noise and no one can sleep. I'm afraid to think what it might be doing.*

ANDY. [*Off the bus in Marrow Borough. Under one arm a large sash window, under the other an empty box.*] Excuse me sir, could you tell me where....

MAN. Where glands grow like weeds?

ANDY. Not exactly. You see I was going to ask if there were a hotel in town.

MAN. Yes.

ANDY. Where?

MAN. Where they make armor of sponge. Do ask another.

ANDY. Do you live....

MAN. At the circus of the absent?

ANDY. Do you?

MAN. Of course, what would an event be without participants?

ANDY. It would be like writing your name in the zip code space, then hiding your zip code in your socks so no one would notice.

MAN. Precisely, young man. It would be like pretending you were drowning when you actually are drowning.

ANDY. [*Pretending he's a pilot.*] I like to pretend.

MAN. Ahh, a pilot. I'm Mosely Fixed and very pleased to meet you.

ANDY. You certainly look fine.

MOSELY FIXED. Hunh? Oh, it's my name you see, and what might yours be?

ANDY. Andy Savior.

MOSELY. Pleased, to be sure. I've never met a real pilot.

ANDY. Neither have I. As per a hotel in town. Do you know....

MOSELY. The Hotel Carnivore. Yes, you see I couldn't think of one offhand when you nearly asked me before, but now I recall. I do live there in fact. Wonderful, the Carnivore, oldest hotel in town. Oldest building in town, as a matter of fact, and the only hotel.

ANDY. That's wonderful.

MOSELY. [*Pointing with his cigarette into town.*] Just down a few blocks. Oldest structure in town. [*Points at his cigarette with his left index finger.*] Maybe the only structure in town.

ANDY. My, that's packed with meaning.

MOSELY. Not too packed, I'm afraid. Burning too quickly. Say, is that a window you've got there?

ANDY. Yes, from home.

MOSELY. Nice view, I suppose.

ANDY. Yes, very. Well, mostly just the corner of the neighbor's house, but if I look up from the corner I can see a little of the park. It's familiar.

MOSELY. I see.

Scene four: *The Carnivorous Carnival is simply too complex. Andy Savior is a simple little thing that would be inconspicuous, even ignored, if he weren't carrying a large sash window and a box marked "MANNY'S URINAL."*

MAN. The police make composite drawings of my friends.

ANDY. What?

MAN. Oh, hello. I didn't see you there.

ANDY. What was that about the police?

MAN. They frighten me. They hide behind cars and jump up and scare me when I walk by.

ANDY. Why?

MAN. [*Advancing cautiously, looking behind cars.*] I suppose they think it's funny.

ANDY. Is it?

MAN. Yes, but you'd think they'd have something better to do.

ANDY. [*Looking around a car.*] I'd certainly think so.

MAN. Say, where did you get that nice window?

ANDY. Brought it from home.

MAN. [*Extending his hand.*] It's nice. My name is Drain. Freddy Drain.

ANDY. [*Shaking hands.*] Thank you. I'm Andy Savior. How long have they...

POLICEMAN. [*Jumping out from behind a car, waving his arms.*] BOO! [*He scampers down the street like a child.*]

ANDY. [*A little shaken.*] Say, how do the police know where you'll be?

FREDDY. They don't, and that's the odd thing. It would seem that the entire police force of Marrow Borough hide themselves all over the city and patiently wait for me to pass by. I suppose that's why they act so giddy when one finally gets me. [*Down the block, the policeman that jumped out is telling a small group of police about his moment of glory. He waves his arms and points back at Andy and Freddy, while his friends giggle and cover their mouths.*]

ANDY. Have you tried hiding yourself?

FREDDY. Well, I'm not going to act paranoid about it. Besides, the police have all the good spots. [*As Andy and Freddy approach the group, the policemen squeal like little girls and run off around the corner, pushing and bumping one another and giggling all the while. On an uneven crack in the sidewalk, Andy loses his balance. He doesn't fall quickly, but performs a little dance in half-balance up the walk.*] Oopsy! [*Freddy realized he spoke prematurely, as he watches Andy careening up the sidewalk for nearly a minute.*] Wait for me! [*Andy finally falls to his knees.*] Did you break anything?

ANDY. [*Shaken, looking over his window.*] No, thank you, but I really must rest a bit.

FREDDY. I understand and agree. But you know, while you were dancing there I was thinking about this and that, you were occupied quite a while, and I think I may know of a place I could hide a few blocks down that way, and perhaps scare a few policemen myself, if you think you'll be all right alone, that is.

ANDY. You go right ahead, I'll be just fine. Good luck, Mr. Drain, it's been a pleasure meeting you.

FREDDY. Call me Freddy.

ANDY. Freddy.

Scene five: *The Carnivorous Carnival jumps quickly from one subject to the next, then snaps back when I don't want it to. On a hilltop, just outside of town, Messrs. Sax and Vibes are pointing long objects at the fair.*

MR. SAX. [*Aiming a pencil from his satchel at the dark tents.*] Mr. Vibes, the carnival is over.

MR. VIBES. [*Pointing an unlit cigarette.*] Mr. Sax, it's not all that.

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, the carnival was downtown.

MR. VIBES. Mr. Sax, it was crowned with renown.

MR. SAX. Yes, yes, Mr. Vibes. [*Mr. Vibes shifts his legs, exchanging his cigarette for a pen. Mr. Sax picks up the cigarette and they resume their attack.*] Mr. Vibes, the carnival was scraped off the walk.

MR. VIBES. Undoubtedly, Mr. Sax, it was hopscotch chalk.

MR. SAX. [*Growling pleasantly.*] Right, Mr. Vibes, right. [*Mr. Sax shifts his legs.*] Mr. Vibes, we got to go.

MR. VIBES. [*Pulls a small screwdriver from his bag and aims it at the fair.*] Mr. Sax, we all go eventually.

MR. SAX. No one, Mr. Vibes, can prove that.

MR. VIBES. Past observation, Mr. Sax, past observation.

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, no one can prove it will happen to us.

MR. VIBES. No one, Mr. Sax, how true. [*Messrs. Sax and Vibes shift their legs.*]

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, I feel dirty deep down.

MR. VIBES. It's not love, Mr. Sax, so it don't hurt.

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, it's a smokestack.

MR. VIBES. Mr. Sax, I wouldn't change that.

MR. SAX. Not for the world. [*Mr. Sax lights the cigarette he had been pointing with earlier.*] A smoke, Mr. Vibes?

MR. VIBES. Please, Mr. Sax. [*They smoke, and remain silent for a moment.*]

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes?

MR. VIBES. Yes, Mr. Sax?

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes.

MR. VIBES. Yes, Mr. Sax. [*They blow smoke into the air.*]

MR. SAX. It's quiet, Mr. Vibes.

MR. VIBES. Until we say so, Mr. Sax.

MR. SAX. My, my.

MR. VIBES. [*Shifts his legs.*]

MR. SAX. [*Shifts his legs.*]

MR. VIBES. Mr. Sax, it was hopscotch chalk.

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, the carnival is over. [*Mr. Sax draws a long nail from his satchel, Mr. Vibes a hairbrush, and they resume their seige of the darkened tents.*]

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, it's hungry.

MR. VIBES. It was the desert.

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, it's hungry.

MR. VIBES. It was the desert in the rain.

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, it's hungry.

MR. VIBES. It was the city too.

MR. SAX. Mr. Vibes, it's hungry.

MR. VIBES. Mr. Sax, it was hopscotch chalk.

MR. SAX. And then, Mr. Vibes?

MR. VIBES. Then, the carnival was over.

MR. SAX. My, my.

MR. VIBES. [*Puts his hairbrush back into his satchel.*] Mr. Sax, shall we?

MR. SAX. By all means, Mr. Vibes, by all means.

Scene six: *The Carnivorous Carnival is sending a chain letter to a chain gang. Twelve jurors are waiting for a cab.*

JUROR ONE. We the jury....

JUROR FOUR. [*Loosening his eyes.*] Part our hair the wrong way.

JUROR ONE. We the jury....

JUROR SIX. [*Spraying grapefruit juice all over.*] Put the proverbial fly in the proverbial ointment.

JUROR ONE. We the jury....

JUROR ELEVEN. [*Has the plague!*] Have a mission. In Burma, no less.

ANDY SAVIOR: Pardon me, do you have the....

JUROR TWO. [*Bouncing his spine on the curb.*] Lips for kissing?

JUROR NINE. [*Fondling a billboard.*] Crayons?

JUROR TEN. [*Craving weak tea.*] Ball to match your chain?

JUROR SEVEN. [*Looking for a cab.*] Ball? Who's got the ball?

JUROR FOUR. [*Splicing a famous film.*] How can we play without the ball?

ANDY. Do any of you have the time?

JUROR THREE. [*Timing the tides.*] For pounding veal or folding your lawn chairs?

JUROR TWELVE. [*Melting cheese over jurors six and eight.*] For arbitrating or arbitrarily enunciating?

JUROR EIGHT. [*Pardoning criminals.*] For obfuscating or objectively confiscating?

JUROR NINE. [*Dying to tell.*] For asking the dinosaurs back? I asked them last time and they made it clear that they....

ANDY. Please, do you know what time it is?

JUROR ONE. We the jury find the time....

JUROR ELEVEN. [*Dancing.*] Crowded and overpriced.

JUROR FIVE. [*Gnawing at boulders.*] And playing the juke too loudly.

JUROR SEVEN. [*Looking for the cab.*] Let's go to Space, maybe Space is open.

JUROR ONE. We the jury find the time....

JUROR THREE. [*Shooting out my tires.*] Hardly worth menacing.

JUROR FOUR. [*Wearing his heart on his sleeve.*] Hardly worth munching.

JUROR FIVE. [*Urinating on everyone.*] Hardly worth menstruating.

JUROR NINE. [*Unrolling his face.*] So we won't.

ANDY. I only asked the time!

JUROR ONE. We the jury do not have a watch and most assuredly do not know.

JUROR SIX. [*Zipping his elbow.*] And would be hung if we told.

Scene seven: *Flesh eaters on parade. Andy Savior enters the Carrion Lounge at the Hotel Carnivore, pretending he's piloting an airplane. The Carnivorous Carnival is determining the connection between the curvature of the earth and curvature of the spine.*

THE GARBAGE MAN. And to think I thought it was a zeppelin.

THE STRIPPER. Imagine!

ANDY. Pardon me?

THE GARBAGE MAN. I thought my Aunt Barge was a zeppelin. I got my camera and called all the neighbors out to look and then it came close and it was my Aunt Barge.

MOSELY FIXED. Ah! My pilot friend, I see you found the Carnivore. Or did you?

ANDY. Why yes, I did.

MOSELY. Wonderful. How's your cigar?

ANDY. My room?

MOSELY. No.

ANDY. My window?

MOSELY. Yes.

ANDY. Fine.

MOSELY. Wonderful.

THE ANEMIC MERCENARY. So now I've a hot tub, but no place to hang my hat.

THE STRIPPER. Did I hear Mosely say you were a pilot?

ANDY. I like to pretend I'm flying an airplane.

THE GARBAGE MAN. I like to pretend I'm in a submarine.

THE STRIPPER. I like to pretend I'm mining earlobes.

THE ANEMIC MERCENARY. I like to pretend I'm planting ivy.

TWELVE CARNIES. We like to pretend we're peeing on fresh produce.

ANDY. I see.

THE ANEMIC MERCENARY. Anyone you'd like to see dead?

ANDY. Not particularly.

THE STRIPPER. If you die in a forest, and no one claps, do you win the stuffed animal?

ANDY. That too is packed with meaning.

THE GARBAGE MAN. Our ideas began to jell.

MOSELY. Have you found what you've come to find, Andrew?

TWELVE POLICEMEN. BOO!

MOSELY. He's not here yet.

TWELVE POLICEMEN. Tee hee hee.

ANDY. I've found anchors and doorknobs.

THE STRIPPER. Have you found what you've come to find?

ANDY. I've found jugglers and baggage.

THE GARBAGE MAN. Have you found what you've come to find?

ANDY. I've found pastry and palsy. [*Twelve jurors were seated at the bar, sharing a drink.*]

JUROR EIGHT. [*Adjusting his neck, which is thick as a tiger's.*] My own guilt doesn't count.
JUROR THREE. [*Picking her teeth invitingly.*] Now David is Goliath.
JUROR TWELVE. [*Polishing his brass knuckles.*] We are the "We are the."
JUROR NINE. [*Wearing a crown.*] We bottle psychiatry.
JUROR SEVEN. [*Looking for the drink.*] And shove the dichotomy.
JUROR THREE. [*Quenching her hair.*] I'm a tandem bicycle.
JUROR TWO. [*Parting his eyes in the middle.*] I used to think flowers meant life.
JUROR ELEVEN. [*Fighting off a pack of wild dogs.*] I used to think crayons meant color.
JUROR SIX. [*Haggling with a vendor.*] I used to think rayon was an odor.
JUROR ONE. We the jury....
JUROR SEVEN. [*Looking for the drink.*] Find the defendant attractive.
JUROR ONE. We the jury....
JUROR TWO. [*Combing his lips.*] Find the defendant not at home.
JUROR ONE. We the jury....
JUROR FIVE. [*Blowing smoke rings.*] Lost the defendant.
JUROR ONE. We the jury....
JUROR TEN. [*Burning hairs in the ashtray.*] Find the defendant not guilty.
JUROR SIX. [*Welding two jurors together.*] It's the only choice.
JUROR EIGHT. [*Mowing the bar top.*] The only sin is "telling." [*All agree. The twelve share the last sip of their drink, and order another.*]

Scene eight: *The Carnivorous Carnival is pouring gravy into coffins, looking at me and asking, "Do you get it?"*

TWELVE CARNIES. [*Coming out of a stall in the men's room.*] What are you doing?
ANDY. Trying to get this urinal off the wall.
TWELVE CARNIES. Can we give you a hand?
ANDY. Please. [*They pull at the urinal for several minutes, finally remove it and put it in the box marked "MANNY'S URINAL."*]
TWELVE CARNIES. Whew!
ANDY. I didn't know they were so heavy.
TWELVE CARNIES. Neither did we.
ANDY. Well, thank you very much.
TWELVE CARNIES. Any time.

Scene nine: *The Carnivorous Carnival is as natural and coherent as the concept of sin. In the Heaven Room at the Hotel Carnivore, a Jesus party is well under way.*

ANDY SAVIOR. Is that you, Mosely?
MOSELY CHRIST. [*Wearing, as were most of the guests, a robe and false beard.*] You say that I am. [*Some guests wore crowns of thorns, others were washing one another's feet.*]
FREDDY CHRIST. [*Drinking wine.*] Remove this cup from me. But not what I will, but what thou wilt.
THE ANEMIC CHRIST. Flowers wilt.
CHRIST THE STRIPPER. And Wilt Chamberlain.
FREDDY CHRIST. Remove then this basketball from me.
THE REAL JESUS. "My daddy can whip your daddy."
That's what the kids all said,
But my daddy created their daddies,
And he can raise the dead.
THE GARBAGE CHRIST. [*Holding a piece of bread.*] He who ate my bread lifted his heel against me. [*Many Christs laughed.*]

MR. CHRIST. [*Pointing a plastic crucifix at the bar.*] Blessed are the poor, Mr. Christ.

MR. CHRIST. [*Pointing a ceramic Jesus.*] Mr. Christ, theirs is the Kingdom of God.

MR. CHRIST. Blessed are they that weep now, Mr. Christ.

MR. CHRIST. Mr. Christ, they are surely gonna laugh.

MR. CHRIST. Yes, Mr. Christ, yes.

MR. CHRIST. My, my. [*Some guests were playing "Pin the Messiah on the Crucifix," others were playing "Die 'n Go Rise."*]

MOSELY CHRIST. The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day and the seed should sprout and grow, and he knows not why.

ANDY. Because seeds are things that grow.

CHRIST THE STRIPPER. He didn't know that seeds are things that grow?

MOSELY CHRIST. I suppose not.

THE REAL JESUS. The day grew black,
And the crowd drew back,
From the cross I cried,
"Get me down, I take it all back."

FREDDY CHRIST. No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, "The old is good."

ANDY. And no one, in a restaurant, would eat the wrong food when he knows what he ordered; for he says, "This is the wrong food." [*Some guests were healing one another, and all were drinking wine.*]

JESUS ONE. Children, how hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God. It is easier....

JESUS SIX. [*Feeding multitudes.*] To parboil world leaders.

JESUS ONE. It is easier....

JESUS TEN. [*Walking on water.*] To lean against a fish.

JESUS ONE. It is easier....

JESUS SEVEN. [*Looking for the wine.*] To blow ear rings.

JESUS ONE. It is easier....

JESUS TWO. [*Healing Jesus eight.*] To attend a luau.

THE REAL JESUS. Judas couldn't be forgiven.
Though his guilty mind was swelling.
He hung himself and lives in Hell
For the lonely sin of telling.

FREDDY CHRIST. A little while and you will see me no more. Again a little while and you will see me. [*Freddy leaves to find the men's room.*]

THE GARBAGE CHRIST. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

CHRIST THE STRIPPER. No, no! It hated me first.

THE ANEMIC CHRIST. I think it hated Hitler first.

TWELVE CHRISTS. [*Jumping out from behind a table.*] BOO!

ANDY. He went to the bathroom.

TWELVE CHRISTS. Tee hee hee.

MR. CHRIST. [*Aiming a pen at other guests.*] Blessed are they that hunger now, Mr. Christ.

MR. CHRIST. [*Aiming a sword.*] Mr. Christ, they shall be satisfied.

MR. CHRIST. But woe, Mr. Christ, woe to they that are rich.

MR. CHRIST. Mr. Christ, they have had their fill.

MR. CHRIST. They have indeed, Mr. Christ, they have indeed.

THE REAL JESUS. Shepherd of my flock,
Out of darkness my sheep I led.
Peter's a rock.
Judas is dead.

Jerusalem

David Fishman

I missed the past;
My undancing feet stirred
through the street dust into cool shadow,
and the dusty stone shadows of men
to whom it was all much the same,
kindled in me a light in the afternoon dark.

In the halls of the grandmother saint,
tucked in a corner of the place where
east and west met and fought and died,
behind solid oak doors, dark with dirt, stain and age
building on the crumbled, the shattered, and the built,
I entered the portals that others hallowed.
And the afternoon light, which filled the stone courtyard,
I left outside with the trees who had seen it all,
and were silent still.
Dark, dank, and empty, filled with
a huge stone hollowness under the vaulting arches,
over the arches, over the once-filled tiers,
tiny ominous footfalls rang the Gothic hall.
I met death that day in the Church of the
plastic baby christ doll in the basement.
She walked, candle in hand, steeped in dark habit.
Susurrant darkness, shadowed by the golden glow, stirred—
but she kept her countenance unseen,
and, virgin and inviolate, passed me in the night.
She passed me in the night in the Church of St. Anne.

And then I left Bethesda, House of Mercy,
having none, for myself,
wandering off into the daylight of the afternoon.
The lion ate the lamb,
sat stone still,
stone always.

66 Newport *Elena Naranjo*

Supermarket Crimes

Richard Ballard

The greengrocer sticks
a loaf of bread in my ribs.
I pale and relinquish my wallet.
He rifles it

takes the picture
of my house and wife
and hurries out
through the Soaps and Sodas.

The butcher coerces me to the floor.
He wipes the blood off his hands
then tries on my coat and gloves.
I ask for the manager.

The butcher mumbles to the woman
behind the bakery counter.
They walk into the produce refrigerator
holding each other around the waist.

I crawl on my belly
to the express check-out
and help myself
to the tens and twenties.

Berlin

Anne Benaroya

The snow is precision.
It stretches tightly over the concrete ruins
and runs up to my hand. Packing coarse coal
into a silk stocking, I gather up the city
and twirl it in circles by its toe
without loosing a single flake—
this has been done before.

The sounds of the street are blown
into the night, a black balloon,
full and round to perfection,
I walk across the surface
trying to unbutton the reasons.

I wait for the trolley with three young men,
their faces baked into loaves
of spongy white bread, I cut them
in two, in four, in eight slices,
each one the same as the last.

Their fathers, with eyes lacquered
beneath wooden lids hang helpless as dust
in the alley, while his cloth swastikas
are torn and pounded into every bullet hole,
plugging the rotten fruit.

In bed with me,
my husband speaks German in his sleep,
though not counted when the lines were drawn,
his blood is sucked into the empty syringe,
with theirs, with mine, with all, collected
and pleated into neat little rows,
preparing for the next.

Untitled *Paul O'Connell*

Program: Blue

Damon Norko

Data

4:30 Friday Afternoon
Trapped in a herd of cars
His memories flood him
He brakes in a panic
Gets slightly smashed
Recognizes De Ja Vu
Leaves car on the highway
Walks under a bridge
Stream rushes beside him
Sunset not beautiful
He stands in the sand
Waves lap his suede shoes
He sinks in

Begin

Arms encircle stream.
Aqua castle forms
A droplet in the sky,
Under the slant red sun,
Warming our faces for
Wrinkles to come.

If
Then

Castle dissolves into
Terrible jealous human
Quicksand blowing dust,
Sea between my eyes:
Evening bloodstains
In the sky.

Else

Ears cry rush hour
Infection time press
Need even seconds exhaust
High, stream returns and
Tear swoops down
To the sea

Continue

Jarred head points up
Sky hurt when it fell
Apocalypse only a
Fender-bender—apply ice,
Though calm, quiet waves
Can still drown.

Endif
Read Only Memory

Arms encircle stream
Turn tap beneath jello void;
Sunshine bleeding,
Poised to massage—
Touch echoes as
Current rushes past.

Save
File
Execute

Ripley, New York

Daryl Wakeley

I.

That summer from the lake's shale cliffs and out
Canada was a blue blur, an extension
of the water; and if three miles on in
above the grapes and houses doubt
could be another country, still they spoke
English there. North was a direction. Nights
the sky would shed green, hang bedsheets and kites
in the dark while the grass turned wet under the oaks.

So when that summer probably the wind
had faltered or steadied somewhere high
between Canada and Mexico, and lay
above the lake and brought down ten thousand
Monarch butterflies, Monarch butterflies,
all day, the sky was scattered, all day.

II.

South was the direction they were flying.
A hundred yards past where the paved road turned
gravel, in the chipped claw-foot tub with ferns
and cattails grown up where the spring
drained, a bony mouth would break the green murk and
gape, and orange fans would move across the bottom.
Goldfish. At dusk I'd bring a fist of breadcrumbs;
they circled and scales glinted like a brass band.

From Canada south across Lake Erie, passed
over the purpling grapes and Frenchman's Creek,
the railroad tracks, the highway to Buffalo,
steeples and potato fields; sinking past
Main Street and across Thursday of the last week
in August: I climbed up and sat in the willow.

Fahming *Pete Dodge*

Lilly Cornett Woods #3 *Ann Bissell*

Stories

Laura M. Ohler

"You watch me break for a car. Space. It's wheels turn airborn voices Of leather, and sheepskin, and that soft material of your body that misses the pavement. Space. How is that so far?"

"Isn't sheepskin and leather the same thing?" Zooey asks, untangling the knotted chains around her neck.

"That's what I thought at first, too, but I don't know, Zoe. I think leather is calf. And anyway, I want to get across that the bucket seats were covered in these protective sheepskins and that when the car overturned, sheepskin was smeared in the road with the broken glass." It is 7:30 on Monday and I am trying to poetically express how I felt when the one and only car I have made love in was totaled.

"Maybe you could put in that the same road that the accident occurred on was the same place you and Gary stopped that night. That would make a neat package. Along with some subtle references about the sex, whose idea it was maybe, and how acrobatic it was to do in a Vette." She smiles, and her varnished Korean eyes stretch toward her temples. The necklaces finally freed of each other, her bony fingers now trace her brow line, smoothing, and move across her lids to her lower lashes. She wipes and inspects her fingertips, checking for mascara. She smiles again. Zooey is twenty-two and tomorrow is her birthday, which makes her almost twenty-three. She is wearing the magenta and black popcorn sweater I gave her. Zooey could not wait to open it.

She is talking now, and driving. She drove over here to see me. Last October had thirty-one days too many, Zooey laughs. I will tell you though that she had a breakdown. Around the 27th, she just walked into the reception lobby of the Palmetto Center and turned to stone. The note that was crumpled and eventually pried from her hand read: *To Whom It May Concern*. "That was all," her mother sobbed to me. "That was all." It has been seven months since then. "I wish you could have met her before October," I tell my friends after I have introduced Zooey and she has turned away. "She was friendly then, and open. She's had a bad time of it, though, and she just doesn't know what to say to strangers any more." Once Zooey overheard one of my apologies and told me later, "I do not know why you tell people I was open then. Today I saw myself and blue light shone through holes in my body, like a dalmation whose spots have been cut out." She did not wait for my reply, but walked away, making scissors out of her first and second fingers.

We used to tell stories. We were introduced by our boyfriends, who were buddies. ("That would be a lie," Zooey would say. "They were not buddies, nor friends, but men on speaking terms in the interest of money. When the interests were different, the speaking stopped." Zooey is a more honest storyteller than I.) After Zooey and I had both gone out for the night, to dinner, or movies, or dancing, I would call her, or she me, and talk for hours in conspiracy. We were working out the mechanics of a new relationship. We laughed. We grew serious, we bounced back. It was as though a whole model airplane was stretched out on newspapers on the diningroom table; we ate around it.

I put away the poem. "I just can't write about the car without sounding comical, Zoe. It was just a silly idea anyway."

She looks down at her paper, left to the textbook, back to her paper again, closer, and shrugs. She closes the book with a slapping left hand. "My conclusions don't agree with theirs at all. I should start my letter to the editor right away." She doesn't, of course, but turns to me suddenly and says, "Jessica, would you tell me a story? We could do what we used to—you tell the story and I pretend I'm an English major and tell you what I got out of it. Okay?" Zooey curls up in the gold overstuffed chair opposite mine, hugging her knees. She must not be feeling well, I think, she must have something on her mind. She has not wanted to hear a story since her last day at the hospital, since I read her Anderson's "Death in the Woods." We used to tell stories. Tonight Zooey has a story she wants to tell me. Nodding softly, I begin.

On a pier that cuts into the Gulf of Mexico, then sews it seamless, there is an old woman sitting on a bench. She has just picked the scab on her knee and it is bleeding. Although I am not there now, I was there every afternoon for a month, between three and five, so I know what will come next. She will blot her knee several times with her forefinger. She will stop and examine the wound, and perhaps blow on it. Finally, she will reach towards her bait pail and dampen the hem of her cotton dress with the live water. Placing the hem on her knee, she will pat it into place over the wound and momentarily return to her fishing.

She thinks about the Florida weather and why her sons sent her to live in the South. "They sent me here after my husband died five years ago. My sons raved about the sunshine, raved about the calm. But there is no calm here, nothing lasts. The tourists who are visiting do their visiting and leave. The tourists who pretend to be natives are heartsick, and soon die." Afterwards she repeats the word "sons" half a dozen times until the meaning dribbles out. The woman told me one day that to say the word "sons" was to leave something unsaid. "My three boys are adopted," she explained, "when my husband was stationed in Hawaii." She continues, holding her side. "When I was ten years old, my bed caught fire and I was burned. I can't have children now, myself."

Children pass by on the pier and they are the old woman's greatest sorrow. She cries when she thinks about her sons, especially the afternoon she brought the photograph to share with me. "There are dozens just like this, dozens to make me cry." Sometime later, the old woman interrupted baiting her hook to look at me squarely and say, "That would be a lie, to have you believe the story about the fire. There was a fire, certainly—this old woman isn't clever enough to pretend that," she chuckles and shows a rotting tooth. "I should tell you, young lady, another story—the truth.

"When I was seventeen, I was crazy about this young man from Hagerstown, Jim Crowley. We danced and shared eight months, and as the days went by, you could tell we were going to be married. I was good friends with his sister, Harriet, and she turned out to be a fairly good snitch. One evening she came to me and warned me that that same night Jim was going to ask me to marry him. She thought I should be prepared.

"I was in love with him, don't get me wrong, but the thought of marriage and kids made me think I was too young. I sent word back with Harriet that I wasn't feeling well, and to tell Jimmy I'd see him tomorrow instead, when my head was all right and clearer.

"And so it happens that my old boyfriend, Raymond, came by close to eight or so and invited me out for dinner. I was blue and Ray's eyes sparkled so, I said yes, and grabbed my clutch and was gone. We ate and drank and had a good time." The old woman sniffed and shifted, the hardness of the bench coming through her thin dress. She looked at me again before she went on.

"I should imagine you know about drinking. It distorts and exaggerates. Moves time. It moved Ray. Ray took me back to his house and," the old woman blushed and fidgeted, "and started being demanding. And forceful. He started throwing cups, saucers, plates, all kinds of things around the room. Finally he just came after me and pushed me hard into the stove. After I started bleeding he got scared and ran away. Soon afterwards, Jimmy did ask me to marry him, never knowing about that night. When the question of kids came some years later, I had to lie, and that's how the fire story came about. But it wasn't really the fire. It was just Ray."

I lean forward. A long pause punctuates the last word until minutes pass. Zooey is silent. Her face has hardened, the muddy eyes solidified. It is as though she has leaned back into the chair with her whole body, with the entirety of her life, retreating. Zooey is seeing that blue light now, oozing through the open wounds and bruises of her body. I understand this and wait. Time passes and she begins to talk. This is what Zooey tells me.

Alleys exist. They back the rows of stores on Wisconsin Avenue and the sidestreets. There are all the things you would expect to find there, a limited

view of one alley is complete. There are cats, and empty cans, broken bottles, and paper litter; there are men who appear from the leaves and evaporate as quickly. There are smaller store signs above the back doors, although I do not know who they are for—the alleys are too small for deliveries. There is one light. I have seen one alley and there is one light. It illuminates a sign and the word I saw was "lamp."

I could imagine that each alley has a silent stone at the beginning of the driveway. It bears a woman's name, or perhaps a man's, and it states their ownership, by virtue of some time spent there, unhappily. There are alleys marked in this way.

I will show you mine. It is elevated and nearly bricked in, except for a space of ten yards or so that is open. A curb borders this space and then it drops five feet slowly to a pocked parking lot. The pavement bubbles and the blacktop erupts to break the yellow lines. The floor is full of stones. But it is that five feet that is important. Listen, there are great trees growing in this bank and their roots, too, break the surface. The roots form natural steps and the rotting leaves a musty carpet. It is the white curb, the brown, muddy bank, the parking lot with the green dumpster that makes the alley mine. I know the strength of those roots and the smell of leaves in my hair.

I was busy every minute at the card shop that Friday night. Part of Hallmark's Christmas order had come in and all of those boxes had to be carried up the street to the storage room. I would not be seeing Gareth, my boyfriend, for we had fought on the telephone. After work, I walked tiredly to my car and found Tom, the man whom I had loved but left for Gareth. His eyes looked like melting chocolate. He shrugged and invited me to dinner. I shrugged and agreed.

We stopped at Benihana's on Wisconsin Avenue for a drink. Something frozen. In the bar he told me he had been to New York and slept there with Liz, an old girlfriend. I still cared and grew very jealous. I flew out of the bar and up the steps but did not make it to the street in time, alone. You slut, he said, you miserable girl, and threw me into the grey slabs, spitting. You are not fit for me to wipe my shoes, spitting again. A family walked by and glanced sideways. My look caught the stare of the son. They went into the restaurant.

But to the alley. I chose it myself, running from Tom down Wisconsin and making the first left I was conscious of. I do not know why I thought I was running to something, just space. And when I got there he was already there, as permanent as the curb, the bank, the lot. He began yelling about Gareth, about the times we were intimate in bed. You take to bed anyone who makes you wet. He bounced my back off the roots. He went on. He would grab my hands and force them into fists, making me hit myself. You hit me, I cried. No, you hit yourself. I should kill you now and put everyone out of their misery. He started

to suffocate me, then changing his mind said, but what you really deserve is a good raping. Someone to put you in your place.

I woke up in his car, on the Beltway. We were going home. He made me promise never to tell this story, or he would kill me. He made me promise to see him the next night. Gareth saw my cut lip and eyes the next day at the card shop. He left me and is dating a loud girl from Spain.

Every man to who I told this story has said, "What did you do to deserve it, Zoe?" or "What did you do?" Every woman sits as you do with her legs crossed and regards me up and down, wondering if it shows. No, the abortion I had to have does not easily show. Look harder."

It is after midnight. It is Zooey's birthday. I look around the floor at the scattered books, her shredded tissue, the forgotten wrapping paper and ribbon. I look at Zooey. "But I clean up," she whispers and I realize she is Zooey for the sounds she knows and her tract of land.

Doorway

Michael Oakes

OPEN
Hinges flex
OPEN
Wrists flex
OPENED.

Another view
PULLING
Another view
PUSHING
Another viewed.

CLOSE
A whiff of air
CLOSE
A stare of air
CLOSED.

Paris Railroad *Anne Sucher*

The Dry Years: From the Collector, 1925

Mark Walston

I do enjoy your scoring me
on account of the paper that I use,
old envelopes, &c. &c.—but as
my skin is thick, I can stand it
pretty well, for you know the sun
and cold blasts have been playing
on my hide for Lo! these seventy-nine years
and a fraction, and as our German
Nicholas Stepline used to say,
"I coon shtand it." I am enclosing
the several stubs which are all
that I have on hand (I think):
Mt. Olie Fruit Co., Dev Bros.,
Feo. E. Senseney and "the said
Asbury Jones" whose bill was
$1.20 to which I added 20¢
and that displeased My Lord;
then to add fuel to the fire
I asked for a further advance
of "maturity"—to well whenever
you say—now say to "may" first.

And it's no wonder that I was mix't
as I found and opened a quart
of pre-war Hayner Rye, Wis. And
it's hot stuff believe me, and oh!
so different from the truck that
Uncle Sam licenses sold at $28.00
per gallon—and then we lie to
get it! Perhaps I should say
lie to procure it. No, I'll
take this back—it's the Dr.

who prescribed a spoonful at a time
as oft as I may desire, just so
I don't drink it all in one day.
I wish you would write another letter
for the paper and rap the U.S. for
permitting the refuse from the Government
Proving Ground to kill the wild ducks,
and for licensing the sale of poor whiskey
by druggists at the extravagant price
of $28.00 per gallon. You can do it
to the King's Taste. If I could do it
as well I wouldn't ask you.

Dr. Marsh has his receipt and
(I guess) you have the stub.

By the way, I received the
old colls. by regular mail this
a.m. and will give them my
usual attention and I wish Judge Haines
could receive the coll. fees—
I'll do my work for nothing. He is
no worse—but not much better
and I fear for him—that he'll
never be. And he is so in need
of cash, all the time. We
came thru the Christmas in
good shape—and now we'll
tackle the New Year which is
a much more ticklish proposition,
but hope to get away with it also,
and without having
a heavy head on our hands.

Contributors

• **Stephen Young** has gone from photographing mad children to light in glass houses ★ **Mark Walston** is a graduate student in american studies and an historian at MNCPPC ★ **Anne Sucher** is a discouraged writer turned photographer ★ **Edwin Remsberg** is a typical *Diamondback* photographer ★ **Laura Ohler** is a junior English major ★ **Paul O'Connell** is interested in art history and architecture • **Michael Oakes** is here again ★ **Damon Norko** has published three chapbooks of his own poetry; the latest is *Liebestod* ★ **Eric Nicholson** is a junior advertising major ★ **Elena Noranjo** is a junior advertising major • **Jennifer La Rue** is a former editor of *Calvert* and a graduate student in English • **Merrill Leffler** is a writer and editor for the University of Maryland's Sea Grant College Program and the publisher of Dryad Press ★ **Christine M. Kulper** has been reincarnated ★ **Jack Kodikara** is a sophomore computer science major and the photo editor of the *Terrapin* yearbook • **Shelly Hall** is a senior general studies major who would be a musician if she had more time • **David Hall** wrote his master's thesis on Reed Whittemore's poetry ★ **David Fishman** is the editor of *Mitzpeh* • **Pete Dodge** is a manic-depressive who, when his condition is stable, does not write for the *Diamondback* ★ **Marty Drake** says that he will write something called "The Sins of Humor" if someone asks him nicely • **G. A. Cate** is a native of New Jersey, has taught for many years at UMCP, and is the editor of *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin* ★ **C. J. Casner** will accept offerings of sushi in 3144 South Campus Dining Hall ★ **Stacey Boehm** "Wipe your hand across your mouth and laugh" ★ **Ann Bissell** is an artist who supports herself by typing for the Facilities Unit in the Leonardtown complex; her work will be featured in the July 1984 issue of *American Artist* ★ **Anne Benaroya** is a junior philosophy major ★ **Richard Ballard** is a graduate student in economics at UMCP

★ new contributor

Thanks: Nancy French, Michael Fribush, Bill Burton, and belated thanks to Eduardo Dalere. Goodbye, Charles Mish.

COLOPHON

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